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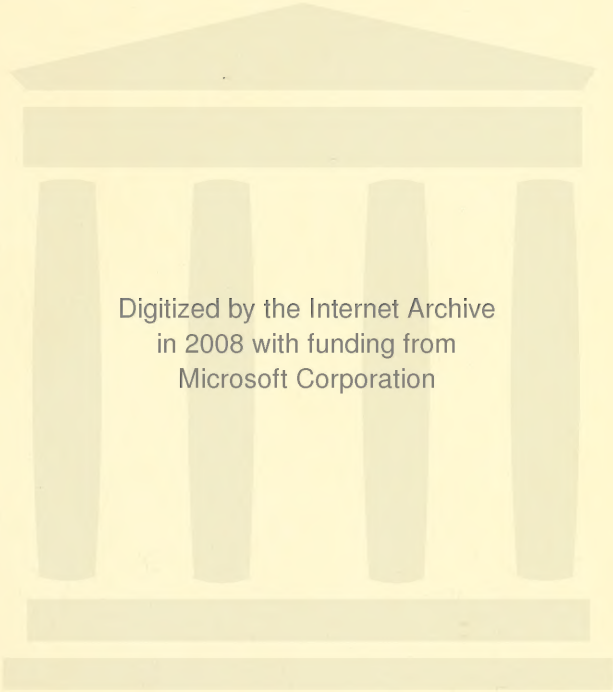

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MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE

WORKS BY GEORGE MOORE

A MODERN LOVER.
A MUMMER'S WIFE.
A DRAMA IN MUSLIN.
SPRING DAYS.
CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG MAN.
ESTHER WATERS.
ESTHER WATERS (*Play*).
CELIBATES.
EVELYN INNES.
SISTER TERESA.
MODERN PAINTING.
IMPRESSIONS AND OPINIONS.
THE LAKE.
THE STRIKE AT ARLINGFORD.
MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE.
HAIL AND FAREWELL:

I	II	III
AVE	SALVE.	VALE.

# of My Dead Life

...lanteries, Meditations
and Remembrances
...iloquies or Advice to Lovers,
...th many miscellaneous Reflections
on Virtue & Merit

by

...orge Moore of Moore Hall Esq.

LONDON
Published by Heinemann.

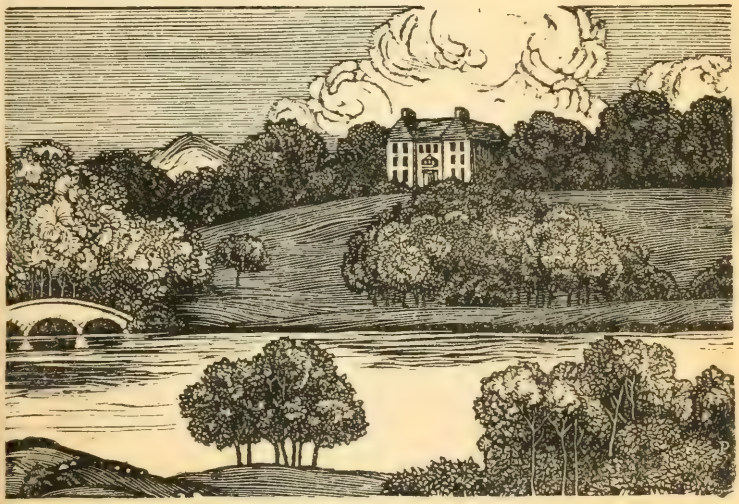
Memoirs of My Dead Life

OF

Galanteries, Meditations and Remembrances Soliloquies or Advice to Lovers, with many miscellaneous Reflections on Virtue & Merit

BY

George Moore of Moore Hall Co Mayo



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MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE

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This is No.....212.....

George Moore

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

May 5, 1921.

My dear Gosse,

In the sunset of our lives we are dedicating books to each other, and I am fortunate enough to obtain from you a gathering of those delightful literary essays which, for the past two years, have kept me looking forward to the coming of Sunday, making Sunday for me a day of solace and indulgence, when after breakfast I fling myself into my armchair and open the *Sunday Times.*

In obtaining your acceptance of this book I am not less fortunate than I was in your dedication to me of *Books on the Table,* and I hope that our love of France and of Paris, and the stories of our many French friends which enliven these pages, will make plain to you that no other book that I have written comes to you so naturally, so amiably solicits the protection of your name, as this one.

It is not necessary, and it might even seem unbecoming, for me to mention here all the French craftsmen whom we have met and shaken hands with at the parting of the roads, but there is one that it would be disgraceful for me to omit to mention, Mallarmé, our friend of many years, one of the saints of literature, who during his life envied no man, who spoke ill of none, and bore without resentment or querulous words the contempt of many, who knew how to accept poverty without complaining, and the

admiration of a small circle as his recompense. And now, whoever knew Mallarmé personally, stands apart among his fellows, very much as Peter and John did after the death of Jesus.

I am writing to you from Changis, a village within a mile or less of Valvin, the new Galilee, whither pilgrims come in increasing numbers. Three were conducted by me yesterday through the forest by a paved Roman way to the Seine. We crossed the bridge under whose piers Mallarmé and I were once nearly drowned, a capful of wind having almost upset the boat that he had bought for five hundred francs, the price he received for *L'Après Midi d'un Faune*. Had I not thrown myself violently over on the other side, and Mallarmé not let go the sheet that held the sail, we should have gone over. It was with my hat that the boat was bailed.

If I narrate this incident it is for that all things relating to Mallarmé, however trivial, are made precious by his name. I had proof of this as I related our little adventure to the pilgrims, who asked me to point out the exact part of the current in which the accident befell us; and, after hearing all that I could remember of him, we proceeded with grave steps and demeanour to the hamlet in which he once lived amid some pieces of genuine Louis Quinze furniture. His daughter, whom I knew from her earliest childhood, is among the gone, and it is her husband who now takes the pilgrims round the small premises, through the strip of garden where the master sat and talked to his disciples, and up the stairs to the room in which he worked.

He was not there last Tuesday, so we could do no more than to walk round the cottage, and it was pleasing to see that the emotion caused by this visit to the master's dwelling prompted a gesture well known to all who remember old Galilee. The pilgrims raised their hands

as we turned to leave Valvin; the gesture was instinctive, and I said, "The imposition of hands," not to them, but to myself, for I would not distract their thoughts from the benign master.

We returned across the bridge and through the forest up the paved Roman way to the supper that awaited us at Le Val Changis—a long, low house, *une vraie maison d'été*, the rooms running into each other, all overlooking a stone terrace, ornamented with flower vases, and a lawn shelving on either side of a group of noble trees, under which a statue stands. The doors of the great saloon open on to the terrace, and the long table at which we sat breaking bread, our words hushed in remembrance of the master, set me thinking again of old Galilee, asking myself if perchance a blackbird whistled in a thicket, or from a tree hard by, when the companions supped with the stranger they met on their way to Emmaus.

Ever yours,

George Moore.

PRELUDE

IT WAS on hearing somebody hint that this volume should be adorned with a portrait of the author that a vision rose before me of many bearded or moustached men, bald-headed and pompous, of young men cast into pensive attitudes, book in hand, of deep-bosomed matrons whose billowy nakedness is barely restrained from overflow in too brief bodices, of budding spinsters exhibiting backbones to the last joint, beyond which the camera may not look without indecency, for its eye is not sensitive to colour or modelling; it cannot stress or soften a line, transpose, add to or omit; it is without the magic of touch, relating only the facts in front of it impartially, the significant and the trivial, the ugly and the pretty. Impartially, I have said, but without attaining to the great impartiality of Nature; photography is finite, and whatever truth it is capable of reflecting is disparate and fragmentary; if we learn anything from a photograph it is an apprehension of the ugly, for photography being strictly circumstantial, the ugly is uglier in the plate than in Nature. "Yet it is proposed," I said, "that I should place my natural defects at the mercy of a mechanism which registers only the casual and unimportant."

On arriving home I began to consider the question anew, and rising from my arm-chair, I said, "The photograph's flat, grey, uniform surfaces are repugnant to all who have become aware that Art resides not in proportions and anatomy, but in

touch. Without touch there can be no Art in painting, in sculpture, in literature, in music or in printing; Art is not in the brain, but in the hand, and Apollo's great gift is no longer in our service; the machine has taken its place. Only in the National Gallery——" At the words "National Gallery," the great array of the Renaissance came into my ken—Italy, France, Germany, Holland—and I said, "Man arose from the ape gloriously, but it would seem that he is now descending whence he came, for without our sense of Art man would be no better;" and I fell to thinking that although it be true that the gorilla and chimpanzee are disappearing, we need not despair. "Their absence," I continued, "will be but temporary; the missing link will soon be amongst us again——" I stopped, brought to bay by a memory of the daguerreotypes of old time, sharp, clear, explicit portraits that Van Eyck would have stopped to admire.

"The daguerreotype was a mechanism, it is true," I said, "but it was a fine mechanism, almost beautiful, and it is now buried among the handicrafts, of which it was not one. Alas! there is none amongst us now who can design a chair or a clock, and we have to buy old tea-services. When these are all broken?" I asked, and my thoughts turning abruptly towards the last Art movement in England—Pre-Raphaelitism—I began to ponder on the meeting of Millais, Holman Hunt and Rossetti in a studio in Newman Street in eighteen forty-nine, till the remembrance of a photograph of a little boy in short jacket and trousers, wearing a belt, whose portrait I had not seen for quite half a century, interrupted my thoughts and propelled me towards the writing-table. And having written for it I forgot it till it arrived some weeks later in a box amid so many various wrappings that it seemed as if my hands would never come upon the many-enfolded portrait. "A too meticulous caretaker," I said, "who puts me past my patience." At last the portrait came forth out of a cloud of tissue, delighting my eyes and putting the thought into my mind that the old and

the new photography differ as widely as Van Eyck and Kneller. "Herein," I said, "is a fundamental likeness that the years could not wipe away, but in a modern photograph the likeness is shadowy and evanescent, as it is in portraits by Kneller and his fellow Lely;" and then, stirred by a desire of truth, I rang for my servants, who recognised the little boy as the original shoot from which I sprang. It was taken across to the apothecary, who knew it, and afterwards to my publisher, who said, "What a dear little boy!" I answered him, "Yes, and it is pleasing to think that I was once not as I am now." "But why did you never think of this portrait before?" "Because Providence kept it back in my mind, reserving it by decree for the book that you are now publishing. This portrait will prove valuable to you, for it will persuade the prudes into reading the book in the hope of discovering in the stories traces of the dear little boy in the frontispiece; he will be, I do assure you (if I may drop into the language of the journalist), your great asset, for on turning the pages to escape from some jarring incident or apophthegm, the prudes will come upon the portrait again, and of a certainty the winning features will bring belief that the little boy must have fallen into evil company or been neglected in his youth, for if he had been brought up properly he would be quite different from his book—no, not his book, his ascendant's book; and fortified by the memory of the dear little fellow (who followed the photographer into the dark room in which the plate was developed in baths filled with various evil-smelling acids, and hung over him while he tinted, passing blue over the necktie and a touch of flesh colour over the face), they will return to the book and in a different mood. Without a doubt of it, Pawling, the portrait will make many friends for the book."

We are always a-dream, from tottering childhood to tottering old age, and that little boy, whose thumb is in his belt (put there by the excellent photographer), was on his way in the 'sixties to a Catholic school, where he might have been made

into a little Catholic if he had not lost his health from the bad food and the piercing draughts that ranged up and down the corridors and whirled in the classrooms. He was taken home to recover, and when he returned to Oscott, some two years later, he brought back with him Shelley's poems for clandestine reading, and the flowers in "The Sensitive Plant" that

> *". . . . gaze in the stream's recess*
> *Till they die of their own sweet loveliness"*

helped him to withstand the pressure of Catholicism and gave him courage to resist threats of floggings if he did not confess his sins. In the influence of "Queen Mab" he pleaded that he had no sins to confess, but this claim was regarded as an untruth—no one being without sin. He claimed the right, however, to lay his case before the president, and was given leave to write to his father. It would please me to tell here the story of his father's journey from Ireland to inquire into his son's lack of belief in priests and their sacraments, but the story is related in "Hail and Farewell," and eschewing paraphrase and quotation, I will return to the little boy who stands by the chair with his thumb in his belt, our budget of information about him not being nearly exhausted.

I have to tell the reader that he was of an amiable and happy disposition, a docile child, yet a wilful one, for although acquiescing in all that was said to him, he failed to deviate from the path that Nature had set for him to follow, thereby introducing into this prelude the momentous question of predestination, on which the lightest and the weightiest minds have pondered without being able to discover how Fate and Free Will may "double up" under the Christian blanket. It would seem that only this is clear, that everything is predordained or nothing, doctrines equally inaccessible to our intelligence; and turning to the photograph, we begin to wonder why Nature should have given such witty eyes to George (eyes that must be facts, for the camera does not invent),

yet condemning him to be not only the last boy in his class, but in the last class in the school—in a word, the dunce of his school. "George's case is really very alarming," the president wrote to his father, and the letter contained the admission that he did not know whether George could not or would not learn. The reader is impatient for me to say whether George "couldn't" or "wouldn't," and he'd have from me a clear answer without subterfuge or evasion. The little boy could learn anything he chose to learn, but he was quite unable to learn anything he had not himself chosen. The reader would press me still further: "But did the little boy wish to learn?" Yes, but his desires for knowledge came suddenly and departed suddenly, like a wind in and out of a field. An alarming trait of character this is, and one that has not been sufficiently investigated. Spelling he could not master, and when he returned home, expelled for lack of belief in the confessional and other things, his father shut Master George up in a bedroom from morn to eve to learn spelling-books by heart. After some months of experimentation in spelling-books and dictations, George's father gave up the job of his son's education, saying to his wife, "George is but a chrysalis, and we do not know if he will develop into a moth or a butterfly." But the memory of his own glorious schooldays compelled George's father to intermittent efforts to cultivate George's mind outside of the spelling-book, for when all hope was dead in him that his son would ever realise in his mind the shape of a word with such clearness as would allow him to find it in the dictionary, he bethought himself of the artifice of an occasional disparagement of Shelley's poetry—"It is strange that you should admire mediocre verses"—and he put Pope's Homer into George's hands; but George's ears were deaf to rhymed couplets, and when he was not reading "The Revolt of Islam" he was in the billiard-room practising "jennys," a stroke his father excelled in. In the midst of a break of five or six the door opened and his father entered

with a large volume in his hand. "Lay aside your cue," he said, "and read Burke's speeches." But George's amiability could not overcome his instinctive dislike of Burke; Burke was the proverbial straw, and he undertook instead to teach his sisters' governess how to ride. His father acquiesced—in despair, no doubt—but despite the relaxations of helping the governess into the saddle and placing her foot in the stirrup, the boy was conscious of being overshadowed by his father, and he sought his own individual life unconsciously, like a sapling under the parent tree. He was unhappy in the strife, for he loved his father; his father was always, and still is, the intimate and abiding reality of his life, and the evening that his father started for Ireland for the last time is quick among his memories. George's father returned from the front door to bid his son good-bye, and in obedience to a sudden impulse he took a sovereign out of his pocket and put it into the boy's hand, and went away to his death resolute, for he had come to see that his death was the only way to escape from his embarrassments without injury to his family. In his letter to his widow he speaks of the landscape that he loved, and I can imagine him walking about the lake shores bidding them good-bye for ever.

His last letter was to his wife, and in it he tells her that if she does not receive a message from him that she is to come over by Monday evening's train, for there will be a great deal to be done. George travelled over on Monday night, trying to console his mother, but that was impossible, for she knew what had happened, and the journey was a widow's in the first wild paroxysm of her grief. George tells the story of his grief in his book the "Confessions of a Young Man," and how in the midst of it he began to foresee his own life in Paris, whither he went two years after to learn to be a painter, failing in this first ambition, succeeding, however, in losing a great deal of the fragmentary knowledge he possessed of the English language.

"But, my dear author," says the reader of this prelude,

"you are beginning to lose the thread of your argument. Your argument, as I apprehend it, was that, having been chosen by Nature for a literary career, the boy's life was pre-ordained. Yet you tell us of his gentle firmness not to learn anything while he was at school, and that he was sent to Paris to forget his small stock of English. The ways by which Nature leads her sheep back to the fold are no doubt devious, but even Nature is not as illogical as you represent her. If she wished to produce an English man of letters she would not send him to Paris to forget English, surely. My dear author, my belief in you fails me."

"In our understanding, dear reader, Nature's logic seems a crooked thing, for our minds are finite; but Nature's mind being infinite, she had to take thought of the deeply-rutted road into which English fiction had fallen, and to redeem mankind from too great admiration of certain she could not do else than raise up a Parsifal, one who should resist school education, be a perplexity to his father at home, indulge himself in the pleasures of opéra bouffe from seventeen to twenty-one, and go to Paris to forget English. A virgin mind, in fine, was needed, and this could only be obtained by faring him forth into French literature while holding him forbidden to acquire any deep knowledge of the French language, providing in this way against the danger of the boy becoming a French writer. Nature's foresight and versatility are indeed remarkable; she is indeed altogether remarkable, this great mother of ours, as much interested in her projects for star-quakes in the constellation of Hercules as she is in schemes to release mankind from its too great admiration of the Villager, the Sailor and the Eunuch. A profligate and sinister comment mine will seem on the ambiguities of our lives, one that will cause the ink to foam in many ink-pots, so I will ask, by way of a diversion, how it is that in an age that produces nothing and attempts to revive all things, no one has bethought himself of a revival of ancient photography? We can understand that the

large firms are content with their profits in the grey, flat charts, maps of humanity's features, but it's hard to guess why some individual, some amateur sniffing about in search of celebrity and a little money, has not turned to the Encyclopædias to read up the processes of the 'fifties and 'sixties. In London there's a gang of women always ready to lend their support to every artistic movement.

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MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE

I

AS I sit at my window on Sunday morning, lazily watching the sparrows—restless black dots that haunt the old tree at the corner of King's Bench Walk—I begin to distinguish a faint green haze in the branches of the lime. Yes, there is green in the branches; and I'm moved by an impulse—the impulse of spring is in my feet; indiarubber seems to have come into the soles of my feet, and I go forth to see London, thinking it delightful to walk across Temple Gardens, to stop, for pigeons are sweeping down from the roofs, to call a hansom, and of all to notice, as I pass through the Strand, the sapling behind St. Clement Danes, so exquisite is the quality of the green on the smoke-black wall. Spring in London

London can be seen better on Sundays than on week-days; lying back in a hansom, one is alone with London and London is beautiful in this narrow street, celebrated for licentious literature. The blue and white sky shows above a seventeenth-century gable. A few moments after we are in Drury Lane among a grim population that the fine weather has enticed out of the courts and alleys. Skipping-ropes are whirling everywhere and the children hardly escape being run over, while coster girls, their mothers, sit wrapped in shawls contentedly like rabbits at the edge of a burrow, their fathers smoking pipes in sullen groups, with eyes fixed on the closed doors of the public-house. At the corner of the great theatre a vendor of cheap ices is rapidly gathering the few spare pennies of

Spring in London

the neighbourhood. The hansom turns out of the lane into the great thoroughfare; a bright glow like the sunset fills the roadway area, upon it a triangular block of masonry and St. Giles' church rise, the spire aloft in the faint blue delicate air, and I fall to thinking that spires are so beautiful that they will outlast creeds, perhaps have; religion or no religion we must have spires, and in town and country—spires showing between trees and rising out of the city purlieus.

The spring tide is rising; the almond-trees are in bloom, and that one growing in an area spreads its Japanese-like decoration upon the wall. The hedges in the time-worn streets of Fitzroy Square light up—how the green runs along! The spring is more winsome here than in the country. One must be in London to see the spring. In St. John's Wood one can see the spring from afar dancing, haze and sun playing together like a lad with a lass. The sweet air, how tempting it is! and how exciting! It melts on the lips in fond kisses, instilling a delicate gluttony of life; and it would be pleasant to see girls in these gardens walking through shadowy alleys, lit here and there by a ray, to see them walking hand in hand, catching at branches, as girls do when dreaming of lovers. Alas! the gardens are empty of girls, but there are some daffodils! The flower is beautiful in profile, still more beautiful is the starry yellow in full face; and that antique flower carries my mind back—not to Greek times, for the daffodil has lost something of its ancient loveliness, reminding me more of a Wedgwood than a Greek vase.

My nonsense thoughts amuse me; I follow my thoughts as a child follows butterflies; and all this ecstasy in, and about me, is the joy of health—my health and the health of the world. This April day has set brain and blood on fire and I cannot do else than ponder by this old canal! It looks as if it had fallen into disuse, which is charming,

for an abandoned canal is a perfect symbol of—I do not know of what. A river flows or rushes, even an artificial lake harbours water-fowl, children sail their boats upon it; but this canal does nothing. Spring in London

What is the blackness that I see approaching? A boat? and coming to interrupt my pretty meditation. I feel quite wretched. I had hoped that the last went by twenty years ago. Here it comes with its lean horse, the rope tightening and stretching, a great black mass with ripples at the prow and a figure bearing against the rudder. All the same it reminds me of my childhood; every child likes a canal and we all remember the wonder with which we watched the smoke coming out of the funnel. When my father asked me why I'd like to go to Dublin better by canal than by railroad, I couldn't tell him. Nor could I tell to-day why I love a canal. Because the boats glide by like the days, and the toiling horse is a symbol? How he strains, sticking his toes into the path!

There are visits to pay—of course women, always women. Three hours pass, but at six I am free, and I resume my meditations as the cab rolls through the old brick streets that crowd round Golden Square; streets whose names we meet in old novels; streets full of studios where Hayden, Fuseli, and others of the rank historical tribe talked art with a big A, drank their despair away, and died wondering why the world did not recognise their genius. Children are scrambling round a neglected archway, striving to reach to a lantern of old time. The smell of these dry faded streets is peculiar to London; there is something of the odour of the original marsh in the smell of these streets; it rises through the pavement and mingles with the smoke. At the ebb of day fancy follows fancy, image succeeds image till all is but a seeming, and mystery envelops everything. The white Arch seems to speak to

Spring in London

me and I would fain believe it has its secret to reveal. London wraps herself in mists; blue scarves are falling—trailing. London certainly has a secret! Let me peer into London's veiled face and read her secret. Let me fix my thoughts and I shall decipher—what? I know not what. Something perhaps. But I cannot control my thoughts, for I am absorbed in turn by the beauty of the Marble Arch and the perspective of the Bayswater Road, fading like an apparition amid the romance of great trees.

I turn away; the wind thrills and obliges me to walk rapidly; the passage of my feet helps me to collect my thoughts and I fall to thinking that I am indeed fortunate to experience so much emotion in Hyde Park, my less fortunate fellows having to go all the way to Switzerland and to climb up Mont Blanc, to feel half what I am feeling now, as I stand looking across the level park watching a dusky sunset; the last red bar of light fades, and nothing remains but the grey park with the blue of the suburb behind it, flowing away full of mist and people, dim and mournful, to the pallid lights of Kensington. And the crowds are like strips of black tape scattered here and there. By the railings the tape has been wound into a black ball, and, no doubt, the peg on which it is wound is some preacher promising human nature deliverance from evil if it will forego the Spring-time. But the Spring-time continues, despite the preacher yonder; under branches swelling with leaf and noisy with sparrows he exhorts, but the spring is there too, exhorting boys and girls, boys dressed in ill-fitting suits of broad-cloth, daffodils in their buttonholes, and girls hardly less coarse, creatures made for work, escaped for a while from the thraldom of the kitchen, now doing the business of the world better than the preacher; servants of sacrosanct spring. A woman in a close-fitting green cloth dress passes me to meet a young man; a rich fur hangs from

her shoulders; and they go towards Park Lane, towards the wilful little houses with low balconies and pendant flower-baskets swinging in the areas. Circumspect little gardens! There is one, Greek as an eighteenth-century engraving, and the woman in the close-fitting green cloth dress, rich fur hanging from her shoulders, almost hiding the pleasant waist, enters one of these. She is Park Lane. Park Lane supper-parties and divorce are written in her eyes and manner, and the old beau, walking swiftly lest he should catch cold, his moustache clearly dyed, his waist certainly pinched by a belt, he, too, is Park Lane. And those two young men, talking joyously—admirable specimens of Anglo-Saxons, slender feet, varnished boots, health and abundant youth—they, too, are characteristic of Park Lane. Spring in London

It was once a simple country lane, a long while ago, it is true, far back in the eighteenth century, and sometimes an echo, no more than an echo, of the cottage of former days seems to linger in the random architecture running to and fro lawlessly into bow window and verandahed balcony, just as the dog rose lingers in the magnificent Gloire de Dijon; and though one wouldn't think it, hearts have been wrung in those wilful little houses—seemingly unsuitable shelters for the deeper emotions of the twentieth century, and tears were shed to my certain knowledge in one of those nooky little drawing-rooms one night of June, when summer breezes swelled the silken curtains forward with a vague mysterious rustling and silences were accentuated by the creaking of flower baskets swinging in the verandah.

'If we were married we should be very happy,' she said, 'for six months.' 'Only for six months?' I answered, admiring her lawlessness. 'Is it then decreed that I shall lose you?' and getting no answer to my question I continued: 'it is decreed, certainly, that you

Spring in London

shall not watch my back broadening as I lean over a table writing novels. You have come into this life to shine in society, to be a light, to form a salon and to gather clever men round you. Elizabeth, you have a course and a destination, even as I have.' Her round eyes were full of interrogation, and always with this idea in my mind of different courses and destinations, our love-story was lived out in Paris and elsewhere. We spent a delicious morning on the ramparts of the castle of Heidelberg; we travelled in Holland, seeing dykes and pictures, and when three months later we returned to England, she hired at my suggestion one of those wilful little houses beloved by me, and for a month we sat together nearly every night on that verandahed balcony. It was in one of those nooky little drawing-rooms that our last love scene was enacted in view of Chelsea shepherds and shepherdesses, happy in their bowers; we were agitated, not they, nor the moon shining on a dusty park, just like a moon in a theatre. The shadows, however, seemed to gather together and to take form and to come close and to whisper that I should never see her again. And looking into her round, grey eyes I begged her to tell me of what she was thinking.

At the end of the book, reader, you will meet again this beautiful girl in a last piece entitled "Resurgam." It tells my journey to Ireland, how I went there with two griefs in my heart, and you shall hear me remember and meditate by the shores of a misted lake among a dim, half-effaced people. A letter from her followed me to Lough Carra, setting me thinking that it would be well for me, if it were not ill, to hasten back to London to learn from her what my future life was to be; whether we were to be estranged utterly or if our bodily relations were to be continued, for had she not in the drawing-room behind the verandahed balcony over yonder thrown herself at my feet saying: 'Now swear to me that whatever falls

out we shall always be friends'? She said that, and not casually but very earnestly, and impressed by her manner I swore that nothing should undo or disturb our friendship; and her words and manner came back to me as I wandered meditating and remembering, as I have said, about the lake, asking myself if virgin husbands exist outside the pages of a French novel. 'No doubt,' I said, 'they do, but so much good fortune can hardly be my lot;' and my mind was ill at ease, for I was going to meet her husband as soon as I arrived in London. Spring in London

It is extraordinary how we can be transported into the past—in thought, everything is thought, all begins in thought and all returns to thought. Life is so illusory that it is hard to say whether we live in the past or the present or the future. Thought veers like a vane, and Lough Carra and the balcony are forgotten and I'm thinking now of the day, of the very hour, almost of the moment when I hailed the cab that took me to see her on her return to London, and how from the time the cab was called till it reached her door my thoughts ran on asking if he would be there. If she would be so tactless as to allow him to be there. And if he were there, what should be my attitude?

My Elizabeth, now alas! a married woman, I saw standing on the hearthrug. She said her husband had just gone out in a vile temper and she talked gaily, but her gaiety was fictitious, mayhap. I have often thought since that I should have done well to have taken her in my arms, ignoring her marriage altogether, which I think she expected me to do, but one never knows. Of this, however, I am certain, that there should be no parleying on such occasions, and no talk about literature, only love should be spoken of; we should plead our bodily love of our beloved, always extolling it as the noblest of virtues, giving no heed to the phrase 'Is this all you love

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me for?' a phrase heard by every lover, but never spoken with conviction, for every woman knows deep down in her heart that all her earthly existence is comprised in man's love of her, and that if we were to withdraw our love she would become instantly a thing half our size, with sloping shoulders and wide hips and usually short-legged. It is our love that clothes her in silk and fine cambric and adorns her with laces, our love puts bracelets upon her arms, ear-rings in her ears, pearls upon her neck and too frequently diamonds in her hair, and if women admire women it is our revelation that showed them to themselves in those wonderful mirrors, Raphael, Rubens, Shelley, Tourguéneff, Chopin. With the intellectual detachment of genius we have carved our dreams of woman in marble, built palaces for her and wonderful tombs. Indeed have loved women so well that women should forget to complain that there are fools among us who chase them round the furniture, and remember that these annoyances of love fallen into silliness are little compared with the benefits they have received from love; and I think that it ill becomes them to praise sexual virtue, which has cruelly enslaved them, turning them into kitchen maids, laundresses, nuns or wives. Women had a better apprehension of love when in olden days they formed into processions and wound through flowery woods to hang garlands on Pan's enormous sexuality.

How one's thoughts wander back and forth from that balcony to ancient Thessaly, where a moment ago I was lying by a dryad in a cavern, watching the stars shining through the leaves. I would know what thought led me to Thessaly, and what thought led me back to Elizabeth, whom I should have taken in my arms when she returned to London married and refrained from speaking of things that did not interest her or me, of literature and music. If I had been so wise she might have been my dryad

mistress again, for she was certainly of dryad heredity. Or was it that my luck failed me? It might well be that, and I fell to thinking of the coming and going of our luck; for there is luck in love as well as in cards, times when we can do no wrong and times when we act as if we were country loons in love for the first time. We tumble suddenly into evil times and ask ourselves if we are daft, as I did one Sunday afternoon; for while driving in a hansom through deserted streets towards Kensington, she came towards me in another hansom, young and alert (her baby was then two years old), her hair thicker, more brilliant, more like real gold than ever, and as I stood talking to her the thought passed that we were not far from my house, and that nothing would be easier than to ask her there to tea. But instead, reader, will you believe me if I tell you that I asked her to go for a drive . . . whither? Were you to guess for a thousand years you could not guess my folly. I asked her to come for a drive with me in the Fulham Road! Why the Fulham Road? Because when luck is against us any foolish thing may come into our heads, and all lovers who have been driven out—there are always lovers wandering, seeking readmission—will understand my mistake, though no one else. I could tell other incidents equally odd, but one more will be enough, for instead of asking her to stay to luncheon when she came to see me, I took her to a restaurant. A strange piece of stupidity, yet all are guilty; and over some such momentary alienation of the brain a lover broods till at last he begins to ascribe his failure to something outside of himself, so easy is it for man to believe in the supernatural.

Spring in London

But while I was ascribing my failure to an evil providence, she had begun to steal again into my life like the spring into winter. The grey weather endures, but now and then a slight rift in the clouds going by shows itself and

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we look forward to a fine evening. Neither the next day nor the next may be fine, the weather may not seem to improve, but the fine days are nearer than they were, and we walk one morning into that delicious warmth which comes suddenly on us about the end of March, a change having come during the night into the wind. 'Yesterday was winter, to-day is summer,' we cry; and it was just in this sudden way that my ill fortune shone out into magnificent good fortune at the end of a day of great depression, when all was grey within and bright in the street. A letter came asking me to visit her in the country, and I drove to the station delighted at the thought of seeing her, but perplexed, for she seemed to have receded so far from me that while waiting for her I watched a woman at the end of the platform, far away, whose long, fashionable dust coat, hat and veil, proclaimed her as one of a set of people so clearly that I said: 'She is the symbol of a certain scheme of existence; her gown and gait reveal her ideas, tastes, occupations, habits, and friends,' whereupon a little dream began in me of how pleasant it would be to travel with her in the train, and with this desire a little regret went by that I could wish to travel with any one but Elizabeth, for whom I was waiting. This elegant woman came nearer—Elizabeth and none other! She was travelling with friends, I could see that, but what one never knows is one's luck; her party filled one carriage and seats were found for us, whether by accident or Elizabeth's design I never knew, in a coupé. Summer was coming in and gloriously, so we noticed that the hedges were lighting up, and we may have spoken of the springing of the corn in the fields, but the moment kept in memory is when, to my surprise and joy, she allowed my hand to remain on her knee. There is doubtless something memorable in the moment when a woman allows your hand to rest upon her knee, and Elizabeth's words

were: 'Well, you've got me again and after all these years.' Spring in London

Yes, truly summer had come in, April turned to May, June to July and July is followed by the dusty month of August. I like not August, for there is in August neither perceptible growth nor decay. When August turns to September we notice a chill in the morning air; it soon passes, however, and there are days in September and October when summer seems to have come again, but with the hue of death in its sunshine, and we think of the lean blast lurking round the corner. A voice breaks in upon my meditation; the voice of a friend warning me of my danger. 'A man,' he says, 'at your age walking about draughty streets without an overcoat!' The expression 'at your age' is displeasing, nevertheless I button my frock coat and pursue my way hurriedly, picking up as I go the thought that it is lawlessness and not obedience that fires the imagination. Every woman dreams of rape by a bandit chief, every boy wants to be a pirate, and the season that attracts us most is the lawless one, the spring season; 'A spring day,' I said, 'is more like her than anything else in the world, and how like her this day has been ever since I watched the burgeoning lime at the corner of King's Bench Walk.'

But there is sadness in the spring; the young do not know how to satisfy their desires and the thoughts of the middle-aged go back to springs long past, mine to fifteen years ago, to an autumn spent in the Basque country. Spring was within me then and autumn was without me. Now the order is reversed. All the love I received from her since the day we journeyed in the coupé together has been richer, more resplendent mayhap, than our earlier love; but in the autumn sky there is always a hue of death, and in the stillness a dread of the

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lean winter coming. Spring love is but tremor, laughter and a little ecstasy; an autumn love is enriched with memories; and its fear of the lean winter coming exalts it. In autumn at the fall of the leaf a man kneels at the bedside of his beloved like a Saint at the Sacred Table; our imagination sanctifies her, raises her; she becomes transfigured; and as I hasten along Park Lane I am transported to the staircase of a London hotel, where I waited an hour escaping down corridors at the sound of every footstep. I waited till her maid left her room and a low whistle sounded, the sign agreed upon.

Again I hear the soft sound of the door opening over the velvet pile carpet, a memory that does not conflict with an earlier memory of her, for it does not follow that because a woman sometimes reminds one of a dryad that she does not other times remind one of Boucher or Fragonard, and that night Elizabeth seemed to me a very Fragonard, a plump Fragonard maiden as she sat up in bed reading, her gold hair in plaits and a large book in her hand. I asked her what she was reading and might have talked literature for a while, but throwing the vain linen aside she revealed herself, and in that moment of august nakedness I saw the eternal spirit shining through her like a lamp hidden in an alabaster vase.

We find divinity according to the temperaments we bring into the world. Some of us find it in Iaveh, some in Christ, some in Buddha; the temperament that I brought into the world caused me to find divinity one night in Elizabeth's bedroom, and it matters little, if at all, how or where we find it so long as we find it. Love is God. How often has this been said, and how well it was said by Saint John of the Cross, who dared to speak of concupiscence with God, thereby shocking his readers, for few have understood that concupiscence with God-kind should be the end of man's striving, just as concupiscence

with human-kind has always been the noble ambition of the Gods. Heathen and Christian revelation have but one story to tell, the love of a God for a mortal, and my story only differs in this that it concerns the love of a mortal for an immortal. Spring in London

Seekers of divinity we all are in secret—in secret, for a middle-aged man walking down Park Lane, buttoning his frock coat lest he should catch cold, would be sent to Bedlam were he to tell that one night in a London hotel he discovered divinity in his mistress. Yet this belief is not special to me, every man of worth holds it; it is far older and more prevalent than Christianity. It is this belief that helps us to live and to bear the dread of the lean wintry years when younger men will seek divinity and find it in Helen and Maud and May. Younger men! Younger men are always about. It was only yesterday that she spoke of a young man who interested her. October turns to November and I am but a faded flower fallen from her nosegay.

A rose shut in a book
In which a pure man may not look.

Be this a conceit or a truth, I have thought enough about her for one evening. Here is Piccadilly, and forgetful of Elizabeth and of catching cold I stand at gaze, thinking that Piccadilly has not yet grown vulgar, only a little modern, a little out of keeping with the beauty of the Green Park, remembering that it was my wont to linger here some twenty years ago, watching the moonlight between the trees with the shadows of the trees floating over that beautiful dell, thinking of Wycherley's comedy, "Love in St. James's Park." I think of it still, and how in the days agone the Argyle Rooms, Kate Hamilton's in Panton Street, and the Café de la Régence were the fashion.

Paris drew me towards other pleasures, towards the

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Nouvelle Athènes and the Elysée Montmartre; and when I returned to London after an absence of ten years I found a new London, a less English London.

II

Lui et Elles

MY WALK from Piccadilly to the Temple was uneventful in thoughts as in incidents, and the steep ascent to my chambers having been accomplished, I lighted my lamp, stirred the fire, and throwing myself into an armchair fell to thinking what book I should take from the shelves to help the time away. 'Literary composition,' I said, 'will wear the time away better than a book.' 'And the reader will be interested to hear,' whispered a penetrating voice. 'By what right does the reader question me?' I answered, and the voice continued, heedless of my interruption, 'The reader would like to be told the state of your soul when—' 'Elizabeth came into it?' I cried. 'A seed falls,' the voice continued again, 'and dies, another seed falls and dies, another, and another, yea, even one hundred seeds will die where they fall if the earth be not prepared to receive them. But it comes to pass that a new seed falls in due time, which springs and blossoms, and—' To cut this homily short I replied, 'By which I apprehend that the reader would like to hear, is curious, mayhap, to hear, of her who preceded Elizabeth, who prepared the way, who—' And the voice answered, 'Yea, it is even so.' 'Is my mind then at the disposal of the curious reader to ransack as it pleases him?' I asked, and to this question the voice within me answered in quiet, even tones that calmed my anger, 'The reader is thy guest, and is therefore entitled to the same hospitality as the guest to whom thou throwest open thy house from Saturday till Monday.' 'And since my rarest wines,

liqueurs and cigars, are free to my fleshly guest, can I legitimately withhold any secret that may entertain a spiritual guest?' I asked. 'A casuist in the highest degree, on a parallel with Abelard or Arthur Balfour, thou art, O my Conscience. At first thy voice was strange to me, but I have come to recognise it as thy voice, Conscience, so I will ask thee, whose business it is to decide all nice questions, if my last secret, my only secret, is to be dragged out of me and exposed in the market-place? For my books are no better though the word "private" is written over the door.' 'To the telling at once,' replied my Conscience. 'But one word more, O Conscience; there are things that cannot be told truly, things that cannot be explained to men, deeds that only God's vast intelligence can measure, weigh, appreciate, and the secret that thou demandest from me being of this sort and kind, I had reserved it for God's ear on the Judgment Day.' 'To the telling,' Conscience replied, 'for since thou hast chosen to wear thy heart, and all the hearts that thou couldst collect, upon thy sleeve, thou must tell all or be judged with the others.' 'Hard words, O my Conscience,' and I began at once. Lui et Elles

'It is many and many a year ago, something like twenty-five, that a letter came to me telling that the writer of a certain book would like to know if I thought the story could be cast into dramatic form. Two sentences caught my attention: "It is true that I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, but that doesn't matter for the present," and "I may add that the book I am sending has been entirely successful." Of the second phrase I am not quite sure; of the sense, yes, but the words, "has been entirely successful," do not seem in the style of the writer. But I will leave them and pass on to tell the reader, my guest, that it was a disappointment to me to find a man's name at the bottom

of the page, for I expected a woman's; and so I answered my correspondent, Mark Anglewood, that I had found in his book what is rare, style, but saw no chance of any one being able to turn the book into a play. And with the posting of this letter Mark Anglewood passed out of my thoughts, till Arthur Symons told me that the author of the book in which I had found an engaging style and much merriment of mind was a woman, and a pretty one. His news, I confess, caused a little sinking of the heart, for as I recalled the book and the letter that accompanied it, I could not help seeing that I had missed an excellent opportunity of securing an agreeable companion, perhaps something more; and with these reasons uppermost in my mind a letter was sent next day, apologising for my mistake, saying that if I had been able to divine a woman in the syllables "Mark Anglewood," my letter would have been written differently. "You may have forgotten all about the matter, but I have just been told that you are not only a woman, but a pretty woman, and this sets me thinking of one of the sentences of your letter. You wrote, 'I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, but that doesn't matter for the present,' a phrase which seems to imply that some months ago you wished to make my acquaintance, and if you are still of the same mind (assuming that you were once of this mind), it will give me much pleasure to call upon you."'

The lady, whose name was Agate, did not delay to answer, and during the drive to a large and rich district of mansions I wondered why she was at pains to write that her assumed name had deceived others besides me as to her sex. A gloomy and imposing street hers was, and the number having been discovered with difficulty, I was taken through a mansion into a drawing-room filled with engravings of Doré pictures and marble statues.

'I am amid the family taste, doubtless,' I said, 'but she must have a private sitting-room, for she couldn't write here.' Lui et Elles

After waiting a few minutes the servant re-entered, and invited me to follow him up many flights of stairs to a somewhat formal sitting-room, reminding me of Mark Anglewood's stiff, precise, artificial caligraphy. 'Is her bedroom like her sitting-room?' I asked myself, 'and is she like her room and her literary style?' She was indeed like both; an elaborately-dressed woman, whose French gown did not keep the word "middle-class" from rising up in my mind. Agate was "middle-class and not a little common." The next descriptive adjective that intruded itself was "dowdy," and as we sat talking the word returned to me, and I said, 'Dowdy is the word we associate with a humdrum mind and shapeless clothes of a past fashion. But her gowns are the last novelties and her mind like new pins. Then why did "dowdy" intrude itself into my first impression of her?' I asked myself as I returned home across the park.

In the two hours I spent with her, her name, Agate, was mentioned, and I learnt that it was a nickname, not a baptismal name; she had partially chosen it herself. Her real name was Mary, but nobody had ever thought of calling her Molly, so she said. And my next visit caused a new perplexity to arise in me, for I found her so witty, so charming and so beautifully dressed (I was now reconciled to her gowns) that I began to look upon myself as a dolt, almost an idiot; and sitting alone in chambers, thinking of her, I asked myself how such a word as "dowdy" could have come into my mind, for were I to search for a word that represented her less than any other word in the language, I should have failed to find one more incompatible with her gifts and her beauty than the word "dowdy."

The next morning I was handed a letter, precise and prim, asking me to come and see her; it was followed by other letters, and at the end of a fortnight of appointments I asked myself doubtfully if I were falling in love; I could not believe that such a disaster could happen to me, for I was thirty-eight and had passed through many amiable exaltations of mind and body. 'Am I at last going to fall a victim?' I said, and fell to considering my condition, differentiating between loving and being in love, for though I did not love Agate, there could be hardly any doubt that I was in love with her. But how was it that I had fallen in love with a woman who at first sight struck me as common, middle-class, and almost dowdy? Often I asked myself this question, without, however, being able to get an answer, and once more I relinquished myself to the consideration of my mistake. It was by the merest luck that I saved myself at the last moment from taking Agate into my confidence; so interesting and instructive did the psychology of my mistake seem to me to be that I think I once got as far as to confess to her that my love was not at first sight, but at second sight, a confession that I perceived did not altogether please her. My account of her and of myself in this love-story would be incomplete—it would be untruthful—if I omitted to say that suspicions often crossed my mind that she was fooling me, but the facts were against this explanation of her conduct, for a woman does not spend four hours a day with a man for the somewhat sterile pleasure of fooling him.

By some word or letter, sometimes even by acts, she would dissipate suspicions, I might almost say the belief, that my courtship would bring me to her bed. To be quite truthful, she hinted in the beginning that sex relations did not appeal to her, but such hints are

so common among women that one attaches no real significance to the confession, or interprets it in an opposite sense, that sex relations are the one thing of interest to them. No one's talk turned oftener on the subject of sex than Agate's; she admitted sex to be her subject; her brain was certainly possessed of it, and though sometimes it seemed about to descend from her brain when we returned from the theatre in the family brougham, I was not sure that our relations would become less and less restrained; and after leaving her a reactionary current of mind threw me often upon the memory of a story she had once told of a professor in some University who had loved her. It is now a little blurred, but I can remember her telling me that he had a mistress, Agate believed her to be a good girl, but a creature of the body, whereas she, Agate, was the spiritual mistress for whom the man put aside his natural mistress, and the end of the story was the man's suicide with the meeting of the two women in his rooms; whether the dead man was there at the time or not I have forgotten, remembering only that the natural mistress, who returned to the man in his need after Agate's desertion, spoke her mind plainly, making it known to Agate that her virtue was more like vice than anything else. 'Were you his mistress?' I asked; to which Agate answered, 'No, I wasn't his mistress; I couldn't live with a man unless I thought I was going to have a child by him'—words that compelled a deep consideration of Agate upon me, for her intelligence, though keen and bright as a new pin, was not enough to evoke the soul of a selfless woman and put it into words, making it plain as her words made it. Balzac or Tourguéneff might have done it by the power of the imagination, but not Agate; she was speaking out of herself, which was all she knew.

Agate was ashamed of her people; she knew them to be commonplace and middle-class, and her whole life was an attempt to escape from them. She kept them out of my sight month after month, and I knew very little of the great house except her prim sitting-room, till one day she said, 'I have spared you my family as much as possible.' But she was giving a great dinner-party and from it she could hardly exclude me—her people would ask questions—so I was asked, and at this entertainment I made the acquaintance of a cousin, a pretty, fair-haired woman, who was carrying at the time. Agate called her a little wanton, and I wondered why, for the woman was her cousin, and one day, meeting her in the street, we walked a little way together, and the talk turned upon Agate; the fair cousin was curious, of course, to know what my relations with Agate were, and to lead me into some confession she began to tell me all she knew of Agate, saying that though she might change her dress three times a day to capture a man from another woman, it was vanity that compelled her. 'She is all head,' said the little blonde lady, 'there is nothing of her below the neck. Among women she makes a mockery of love, of the act, you know what I mean?' I said that I did, and fell to thinking of what Agate had once said to me, 'I can't live without men's society; if I am deprived of it for about a week I begin to wilt.'

A soul so unnatural as Agate's cannot be analysed, but in an incident we may catch a glimpse of it if the teller of the incident have the skill which allowed Jean Jacques to reveal much about men and women that had never been published before. Only in his telling do ugly incidents acquire the beauty of Parian marble, and he and he only would be able to relate how an old friend, seeing us walking in a picture gallery together, had recognised Agate at sight as her enemy and turned faint. Jean

Jacques' pen would reveal more than a simple aspect of the subject, and I do not doubt that he would interpret the exquisite relish with which Agate enjoyed the pain she had given, and the pleasure it was to her to include in the letter she addressed to me the same evening (she wrote every evening): 'Is your friend in love?' I think that I hated Agate for a moment, for I knew the woman she spoke slightingly of to be a true friend, and when I asked her what she thought of Agate, she said, 'A mean little mind, with a taste for intrigue.' Her summary of Agate's character found an echo in my heart, but I could not break with Agate; and as the spring weather went by I fell more and more in love with her, seeing her every day for some four or six hours, lunching with her, dining with her, supping with her, walking, talking, æstheticising, and enjoying many afternoons at Dorking in her company, sitting on the warm hillside immersed in love of her while she planned some new refinement of cruelty.

Agate was rich in little inventions; we explored museums, studying masterpieces together, and in the Queen's Hall listened to Wagner (those were the great Wagnerian days) till it seemed to us one evening as we walked out of the concert-room into a pleasant sunset in Portland Place that we could not do else than go to Bayreuth to hear "The Ring" in its entirety. To share "The Ring" with Agate seemed to me a sublime thought, and the journey to Bayreuth to furnish a parallel to Georges Sand's celebrated journey to Venice with Alfred de Musset.

Agate was willing, the tickets were taken, but as the day of departure approached I began to notice that when the word "Bayreuth" was mentioned a perplexed look came into her face. Agate never was perplexed, I am misinterpreting her, and will say instead that her face darkened and that her manner, never very real, became

more and more artificial during the performance of a play at the St. James's. At Gunter's I could hardly doubt that something was upon her mind, and maybe I pressed her to confide in me as we drove round Berkeley Square. It cost her an effort to get the words out, but she got them out, 'I don't think I want to see you any more.' They awoke a miserable pain in me, and though I did not believe them to represent more than a casual mood, like any other lover I begged her to tell me that the estrangement was temporary, in view of divorce proceedings or some other untoward circumstance; but all the way to the Marble Arch Agate persisted in her determination not to see me any more, and it was not till we came to the Bayswater Road that she relented enough to come into the park to talk it over, raising a slight objection, however, 'I am afraid it is wet underfoot.' 'It is not raining,' I answered, and called to the driver to pull up the glass.

The park lay pressed down by a leaden sky, with great green trees stark and dripping in the spare twilight. Nobody was about, and we walked up and down the long walk many times, she listening to my pleading, to all that the foolish lover says on such occasions, myself cutting, let it be admitted, a somewhat ridiculous figure. At last my stunned brain awoke, and I saw she was enjoying my grief as she might a little comedy of her own invention, conscious of her prettiness in black crêpe de Chine with a hat to match. We were walking towards Kensington, I on her right on the side next the railings, and the ill-repressed smile that I caught sight of under her hat cast me out of myself; a great self quake it was, and my left foot, flinging itself forward, hit her nearly in the centre of her backside, a little to the right. She uttered a cry, and I met her look, which curiously enough was not of detestation, for lack of perception was not Agate's failing; and I

think she took pride in the fact (I know she did later) that her power over me should have caused me to put off all conventions and to have become, as it were, another George Moore. Lui et Elles

But this rapid glance into Agate's mind passed away, engulfed, lost sight of, in an instinctive, almost animal, desire to escape from myself, from grinding thoughts, vain hopes, recriminations, soul searchings, during the long night; and being no wine-bibber I bethought myself of another woman, it didn't matter who, somebody to speak to. At the Alhambra I should find her. So I went thither, and picking out the face that seemed the kindest spent part of the night with her. My bed-fellow divined my misfortune, or seemed to, though nothing of it was related to her, and I began to wonder, betweenwhiles, if she sympathised with me and was sorry for me, or whether she resented being picked up and taken for an anodyne. But is it not always so? Are not all and sundry seeking anodynes in each other? A face rises out of the darkening years of one who left her house to find somebody in the street to talk to; 'It doesn't matter, nothing matters now, I am done for,' she said, and her tears made it clear to me that I was for that night a makeshift anodyne.

'A change of scene, of language, and of friends, may cure me,' I said, awaking from the dazed stupor in which I sat all day in chambers, unable to fix my attention, all things indifferent to me. 'A change of scene, of language, and of friends,' I said, rousing myself enough to wander to the window. 'Paris may cure me,' and I went thither, to meet unexpectedly, among the crowds that the courtyard of a great cosmopolitan hotel collects, the woman whom I met whilst walking in a picture gallery with Agate. She asked me if I had seen Agate lately and I gave some conventional answer; and I think that we went to the Bois de Boulogne and rowed out to the island. Does the lake

contain an island? My memory clings to a corner in a wood by the water's edge, but is the corner in an island? I do not know, and it doesn't matter. Enough it is to say that in such a corner we lay among tall grasses under trees, she talking of Agate, and I lacking strength to put the subject aside, lest she should guess the truth; a vain fear, for it must have been clear to her that I was a very sick man indeed, and the talk turning on the last time we met, in the picture gallery, I asked her how it was that she read Agate through at first sight. 'A woman,' she answered, 'knows all that concerns her.'

I marvelled at this instinctive knowledge, and perceiving that I had brought my sickness with me I returned to London, my thoughts forever asking if my pain would pass from me and if I should ever enjoy again my own light-hearted life, mine before I met Agate. Human nature is so complex that, though I longed to be cured of my love sickness, I did not regret the past, not even the kick, for she deserved it, and were the past undone so that it might be lived over again, the kick would be repeated, even if a moment were given to me to consider the act. 'It was inevitable,' I said, 'part of the world's history,' and I lost sight of all things but the track of my boot on the black crêpe de Chine. 'Even a pre-sensation of my miserable suffering would not have stopped me,' I cried, starting from my chair and, going to the window, stood there unsuspicious that my cure was coming towards me and that I should find it on the terrace outside overlooking the river in the Savoy Hotel, whither I must go at once, having forgotten to order dinner for the friends who were dining with me the next day.

We like to think of a Weaver, and since the threads of every destiny are in his woof I must fain believe that he sent Elizabeth to me; and if this be so, and I cannot think else, I am thankful to him for the gracious gown he

ordered her to wear that day, a grey and pink shot silk which I should have asked her to give me before she cast it away, for it would have been a pleasant object in my wardrobe to look upon when my spirit was slack, though it never can be slack again as it was the day that I met Elizabeth, the day that she came forward in the restaurant in fine health, high spirits, blonde hair and tiny hands, to insist that I must remain to luncheon with her, and incidentally, with her company. Only such impulsiveness as hers could have overcome my reluctance, for I was minded to return to my writing, the only cure for my sickness. She must have divined it, and her kind heart must have told her that she could cure it, or it may have been that some book of mine stirred her imagination.

Balzac omitted, if my memory does not fail me, to remark that a man loves in the first instance through the eye; his eye must be pleased, though not necessarily by beauty (perfection carries its own imperfection); a strangeness wins a woman brighter triumphs than regular features, and a special turn of mind longer triumphs than good sense. For though won by the eyes in the first instance, a man welcomes notable talents in his mistress, those that nature has given her and those with which his imagination has endowed her. These are condiments which he sucks slowly, at his leisure, whereas a woman loves through her imagination rather than through her eyes, transforming hunchbacks into stalwart heroes, a matter of psychology that sets me thinking of a girl who married in the middle of her beautiful youth a clever little man of four feet six inches (not tall enough to sit on a chair at table) without perceiving that she was marrying a dwarf. 'I never noticed his height,' she answered her family, who protested against the alliance, 'but now you mention it I see that he is somewhat short.'

The innocency of the remark is touching, and we may

look upon it as sublime if we like, or found a moral doctrine upon it, one that should be included in every lover's handbook, but which would not avail him if it were; for though many will understand the theory, none will be able to put it into practice, that if we wish to retain our mistresses' love we must never come down from the pedestals on which they have placed us, saying, 'I am weary of my pedestal, let me come down, dear mistress, and be the carpet under thy feet.' The temptation to turn himself into a carpet on which his mistress rests, if she does not wipe her feet, has proved the undoing of many a love-story, for the devout lady is very soon bored, and turning away goes to another altar to worship new divinity, which her imagination has exalted out of common clay and which she believes represents her final desire, that which she has been seeking always.

So is the tale told, and in telling it I am relating my own story always. For the first six months I was in love with Agate retrospectively, and Elizabeth was determined at all costs to rout her rival, and when at the end of six months Agate was in the dust, I, alas, was weary of my pedestal and came down from it to perceive the weariness that would have overtaken Saint Teresa if God had come down from the altar and kissed and handled her. She confesses as much in her own biography, imploring pardon for her own infidelity to the Son, the Father having won her over for a time, but only for a time.

Elizabeth was a constant but unfaithful mistress; in her own words she 'liked not continuity,' but was willing to pick up a thread again; and I forgave her certain caprices and take pleasure in remembering that I outlived them all, and that when my poor little reel was empty, when there was no more thread to unwind, a great love passed into a perfect friendship as beautifully and serenely as summer passes into a still autumn, in which all the

suffering that she caused me (and she caused me a good deal, for she was terribly egotistical at times) is forgotten, and I remember only the divine recompenses, some of which have been related in a preceding chapter. Even Agate has come to be forgiven; I should have written pardoned, and on this truer word I fall to thinking that she prepared the way for the greater love, and served me as Rosalind served Romeo. Lui et Elles

III

PARIS DRAWS me still and though the hour was that stupid hour, seven in the morning, I walked gaily up the grey platform of the Gare du Nord, my head filled with memories of the sea, remembering it as a blue plain without beginning or end on which the ship threw a little circle of light, moving always like life itself, with darkness before and after. And whilst walking up the platform I recalled the moment before we began to steam into the long winding harbour in the dusk, for against the green sky, along the cliff's edge a line of broken paling had zigzagged; one star shone in the dawning sky, one reflection wavered in the tranquil harbour and there was no sound except the splashing of paddle-wheels, nor wind enough to take the fishing-boats out to sea. The boats rolled in the tide, their sails only half filled, and from the deck of the steamer we watched the strange crews, wild-looking men and boys leaning over the bulwarks; and I remembered, too, how I had sought for the town amid the shadow but failed to trace it, yet knew it was there smothered in the dusk under the green sky, every street leading to the cathedral and every one crossed by flying buttresses, the round roof disappearing amid chimney-stacks. A curious pathetic town is Dieppe, full of nuns and pigeons, old gables and strange dormer windows. In Flowering Normandy

courtyards where French nobles once assembled fish was being sold while we watched the green sky widening, the town coming into outline slowly, so slowly that only a few roofs were visible when we were called upon to take our seats in the train. We moved along the quays into the suburbs and then into a quiet garden country of little fields and brooks and hillsides breaking into cliffs. The fields and the hills were still shadowless and grey and even the blossoming orchards seemed sad—all things are sad at dawn. But what shall I say of their beauty when the first rose clouds appeared above the hills? That there is no such journey in the world as the journey from Dieppe to Paris on a fine May morning. Nobody forgets his first glimpse of Rouen Cathedral in the diamond air, the branching river and the tall ships anchored in the deep current. We were dreaming of the cathedral long after we had left Rouen behind us, and when we awoke from our dream we were in the midst of a flat green country, the river winding about islands and through fields in which stand solitary poplar-trees, formerly haunts of Corot and Daubigny. We saw the spots where they set their easels—that slight rise with the solitary poplar for Corot's, that rich river bank and shady backwater for Daubigny's.

Soon after the first weir came into sight, and then the first hay-boat. At every moment the river seemed more serene, more gracious; it passed its arms about a flat, green-wooded island on which there is a rookery; and sometimes we saw it ahead of us, looping up the verdant landscape as if it were a gown, running through it like a white silk ribbon, and over yonder the green gown disappearing in fine muslin vapours, drawn about the low horizon. And not for a moment did we weary of this landscape. We were sorry when the first villa appeared. Another and then another showed between

the chestnut-trees in bloom; and there were often blue vases on the steps and sometimes lanterns in metalwork hung from wooden balconies. The shutters were not open when the train went by, those heavy French shutters that we all know so well, and that give the French houses such a look of comfort, of ease, of long tradition. The aspect of a street strikes us if we remember Paris, and I said, 'Is it possible that we are passing through Asnières?' The name flitted past, and I was glad I had recognised Asnières, for at the end of that very long road is the restaurant where we dined long ago, and between it and the bridge is the *bal* where we danced. And it was there that I saw the beautiful Blanche D'Antigny surrounded by her admirers. It was there she sat by the side of the composer of the musical follies which she sang—in those days I thought she sang enchantingly, for those were the days of L'Œil Crevé and Chilpéric. She once passed under the chestnut-trees of that dusty little *bal de banlieue* with me by her side, proud of being with her. She has gone and Julia Baron has gone; Hortense has outlived them all. She must be very old, eighty-five at least. It would be wonderful to hear her sing, 'Mon cher amant, je te jure,' in the quavering voice of eighty-five; it would be wonderful to hear her sing it, for she doesn't know how wonderful she is: the old light of love requires an interpreter, and she has had many; many great poets have voiced her decadence and decay.

Flowering Normandy

Not five minutes from that *bal* was the little house in which Hervé lived, and to which he used to invite us to supper; and where, after supper, he used to play to us the last music he had composed. We listened, but the public would listen to it no longer. Sedan had taken all the tinkle out of it, and the poor *compositeur toqué* never caught the public ear again. We listened to his chirpy scores, believing that they would revive that old

Flowering Normandy

nervous fever which was the Empire when Hortense took the Empire for a springboard, and Paris cried out, 'Cascade ma fille, Hortense, cascade.' The great Hortense Schneider, the great goddess of folly, used to come hither to sing the songs which were intended to revive her triumphs. She was growing old then, her days were over, and Hervé's day was over. Vainly did he pile parody upon parody; vainly did he seize the conductor's *bâton;* the days of their glory were gone and now Asnières itself is forgotten! The ballroom has been pulled down, and never again will an orchestra play a note of these poor scores; even their names are unknown. A few bars of a chorus of pages came back to me, remembered only by me, all are gone, like Hortense and Blanche and Julia.

But after all I am in Paris. Almost the same Paris; almost the same George Moore, my senses awake as before to all enjoyment, my soul as enrapt as ever in the divine sensation of life. Once my youth moved through thy whiteness, O City, and its dreams lay down to dream in the freedom of thy fields! Years come and years go, but every year I see city and plain in the happy exaltation of spring, and departing before the cuckoo, while the blossom is still bright on the bough, it has come to me to think that Paris and May are one.

IV

A Waitress

FEELING THAT he would never see Scotland again, Stevenson wrote in a preface to *Catriona:* 'I see like a vision the youth of my father, and of his father, and the whole stream of lives flowing down there far in the north, with the sound of laughter and tears, to cast me out in the end, as by a sudden freshet, on these

ultimate islands. And I admire and bow my head before the romance of destiny.' Very good, very good indeed, cry I; but does not this sentence read as if it were written in the stress of some effusive febrile emotion, as if he wrote while still pursuing his idea? And so it reminds us of a moth fluttering after a light. But however vacillating, the sentence contains some pretty clauses, and it will be remembered though not perhaps in its original form. We shall forget the 'laughter and the tears' and the 'sudden freshet,' and a simpler phrase will form itself in our memories. The emotion that Stevenson had to express transpires only in the words, 'romance of destiny, ultimate islands.' For who does not feel his destiny to be a romance, and who does not admire the ultimate island whither his destiny will cast him? Giacomo Cenci, whom the Pope ordered to be flayed, no doubt admired the romance of destiny that laid him on his ultimate island, a raised plank, so that the executioner might conveniently roll up the skin of his belly like an apron. And a hare that I once saw beating a tambourine in Regent Street looked at me so wistfully that I am sure puss admired in some remote way the romance of destiny that had taken her from the woodland and cast her upon her ultimate island—in this case a barrow. But neither of these strange examples of the romance of destiny seems to me more wonderful than the destiny of a wistful Irish girl whom I saw serving drinks to students in a certain ultimate café in the Latin Quarter, and she, too, no doubt, admired the destiny which had cast her out, ordaining that she should die amid tobacco smoke, serving drinks to students, entertaining them with whatever conversation they desired.

Gervex, Mademoiselle D'Avary, and I, went to this café after the theatre for half an hour's distraction. I thought that the place seemed too rough for Mademoiselle

A Waitress

D'Avary, but Gervex said that we should find a quiet corner, and we happened to choose one in charge of a thin, delicate girl, a girl touched with languor, weakness, and a grace which interested and moved me: her cheeks were thin, and the deep grey eyes were wistful as a drawing by Rossetti, and her waving brown hair fell over the temples, looped up low over the neck after the poet's fashion. The two women looked at each other, one woman healthful and rich, the other poor and ailing; so it were easy to guess that the thought that passed across their minds was why life had come to them so differently. But first I must tell who was Mademoiselle D'Avary, and how I came to know her. I had gone to Tortoni, a once celebrated café at the corner of the Rue Taitbout, the dining-place of Rossini. When Rossini had earned an income of two thousand pounds a year, it is recorded that he said, 'Now I've done with music, it has served its turn, and I'm going to dine every day at Tortoni's.' Even in my time Tortoni was the tryst of the world of art and letters; every one was there at five o'clock, and to Tortoni I went the day I arrived in Paris to make known the fact that I was back in Paris again. Tortoni was a sort of publication, and there I discovered a young man, one of my oldest friends, a painter of talent (he had a picture in the Luxembourg), who seized me by the hand, and with voluble eagerness told me that I was the person he was seeking: he had heard of my coming and had sought me in every café from the Madeleine to Tortoni. I learnt from him that he had been seeking me, for he wished to ask me to dinner to meet Mademoiselle D'Avary. We were to fetch her in the Rue des Capucines. I write the name of the street, not because it matters to my little story in what street she lived, but because the name is an evocation. Those who like Paris like to hear the names of the streets, and the long

staircase turning closely up the painted walls, the brown painted doors on the landings, and the bell-rope, are evocative of Parisian life; and Mademoiselle D'Avary is herself an evocation, for she was an actress of the Palais Royal. My friend, too, is an evocation; for he is one of those whose pride is not to spend money upon women, whose theory of life is that 'If she likes to come round to the studio when one's work is done, *nous pouvons faire la fête ensemble.*' But however defensible this view of life may be, and there is much to be said for it, I thought that he might have refrained from saying, when I looked round the drawing-room admiring it—a drawing-room furnished with sixteenth-century bronzes, Dresden figures, *étagères* covered with silver ornaments, three drawings by Boucher—Boucher in three periods—a French Boucher, a Flemish Boucher, and an Italian Boucher—that I must not think that any of these things were presents from him, and from saying when she came into the room that he did not give her the bracelet on her arm. It seemed to me in slightly bad taste that he should remind her that he made no presents, for his remark clouded her joyousness, and I could see that she was not so happy at the thought of going out to dine with him as she had been. A Waitress

It was *chez Foyot* that we dined, an old-fashioned restaurant still free from the new taste that likes walls painted white and gold, electric lamps and fiddlers. After dinner we went to see a play next door at the Odéon, a play in which shepherds spoke to each other about singing brooks, and stabbed each other for false women, a play diversified with vintages, processions, wains and songs. During the *entr'actes* Gervex paid visits in various parts of the house, leaving Mademoiselle D'Avary to make herself agreeable to me, which was easy to do, for I dearly love to walk by the perambulator in which

A Waitress

Love is wheeling a pair of lovers. After the play he said, 'Allons boire un bock,' and we turned into a café furnished with tapestries and oak tables, and old-time jugs and Medici gowns, a café in which a student occasionally caught up a tall bock in his teeth, emptied it at a gulp, and after turning head over heels, walked out without having smiled. Mademoiselle D'Avary's beauty and fashion drew the eyes of all the students. She wore a flower-enwoven dress, and from under the large hat her hair showed dark as night; and her Southern skin filled with rich tints, yellow and dark green where the hair turned to down on the neck; the shoulders drooped into opulent suggestion in the lace bodice; and to me it was interesting to compare her ripe beauty with the pale deciduous beauty of the waitress. Mademoiselle D'Avary sat, her fan widespread across her bosom, her lips parted, her small teeth showing between her red lips, and the waitress sat, her thin arms leaning on the table, joining very prettily in the conversation, betraying only in one glance that she was reading success and failure in herself and Mademoiselle D'Avary. And so immersed was I in their contrasted lives that it was some time before my ear caught an accent, and when heard it was difficult to trace it to any country. At last I heard an unmistakable English intonation, and said:—

'But you're English.'

'I'm Irish. I'm from Dublin.'

And thinking of a girl reared in Dublin conventions, but whom the romance of destiny had cast upon this ultimate café, I could not do else than to ask her how she had found her way hither, and was told that she left Dublin when she was sixteen to come to Paris to take a situation as nursery governess. She told me that she went with the children to the Luxembourg Gardens and met a student who—— The rest of the story is easily

guessed. He had no money to keep her, so she had to come to this café to earn her living. A Waitress

'It doesn't suit me, the tobacco smoke makes me cough. But one must live.' One lives to die, she like another, thought I, and sat looking at her. She must have guessed what was passing in my mind, for she told me that one lung was gone, and that the doctor had advised her to go away South.

Seeing that Gervex and Mademoiselle D'Avary were engaged in conversation, I leaned forward and gave all my thoughts to this wistful Irish girl, so charming in her phthisis, in her red Medici gown, with long rucked sleeves. I offered her drink, for to do so was the custom of the place, but she said that drink harmed her. Perhaps I would not mind paying for a piece of beefsteak instead. She was ordered to eat raw steak! and I have only to close my eyes to see her going over to the corner of the café to cut a piece which she said she would eat before going to bed, in about two hours' time.

'I should like to take you South and attend upon you.'

'I'm afraid you would grow weary of nursing me. And I should be able to give you very little in return for your care, for the doctor says I'm not to love any one.'

We must have talked for some time, for it was like waking out of a dream when Gervex and Mademoiselle D'Avary started to their feet to go, and seeing how interested I was, he laughed, saying to Mademoiselle D'Avary that it would be kind to leave me with my new friend. His pleasantry jarred, and though I should like to have remained, I followed them into the street, where the moon was shining over the Gardens. As I have said before, I dearly love to walk by a perambulator in which Love is wheeling a pair of lovers: but it is sad to find oneself alone on the pavement at midnight. I ought to

A Waitress have gone back to the café, but I wandered on, thinking of the girl I had seen, and of her certain death, for she could not live many months in that café, of that I was sure. We all want to think at midnight, when the city looks like a black Italian engraving under the moon; poems come to us as we watch a swirling river; and not only the idea of a poem came to me that night, but on the Pont Neuf the words began to sing together, and I jotted down the first lines before going to bed, and all the next day was passed in composition.

We are alone! Listen, a little while,
And hear the reason why your weary smile
And lute-toned speaking are so very sweet,
And how my love of you is more complete
Than any love of any lover. They
Have only been attracted by the grey
Delicious softness of your eyes, your slim
And delicate form, or some such other whim
The simple pretexts of all lovers;—I
For other reason. Listen whilst I try
To say. I joy to see the sunset die
As the world turns in pale tranquillity,
Leaving the heavens a melancholy calm
Of quiet colour chaunted like a psalm,
In mildly modulated phrases; thus
Your life shall fade like a voluptuous
Vision beyond the sight, and you shall die
Like some soft evening's sad serenity. . . .
I would possess your dying hours; indeed
My love is worthy of the gift, I plead
For them. Although I never loved as yet,
Methinks that I might love you; I would get
From out the knowledge that the time was brief,
That tenderness, whose pity grows to grief,

And grief that sanctifies, a joy, a charm
Beyond all other loves, for now the arm
Of Death is stretched to you-ward, and he claims
You as his bride. Maybe my soul misnames
Its passion; love perhaps it is not, yet
To see you fading like a violet,
Or some sweet thought, would be a very strange
And costly pleasure, far beyond the range
Of formal man's emotion. Listen, I
Will choose a country spot where fields of rye
And wheat extend in rustling yellow plains,
Broken with wooded hills and leafy lanes,
To pass our honeymoon; a cottage where
The porch and windows are festooned with fair
Green leaves of eglantine, and look upon
A shady garden where we'll walk alone
In the autumn sunny evenings; each will see
Our walks grow shorter, till to the orange-tree,
The garden's length, is far, and you will rest
From time to time, leaning upon my breast
Your languid lily face. Then later still
Unto the sofa by the window-sill
Your wasted body I shall carry, so
That you may drink the last left lingering glow
Of evening, when the air is filled with scent
Of blossoms; and my spirits shall be rent
The while with many griefs. Like some blue day
That grows more lovely as it fades away,
Gaining that calm serenity and height
Of colour wanted, as the solemn night
Steals forward you will sweetly fall asleep
For ever and for ever; I shall weep
A day and night large tears upon your face,
Laying you then beneath a rose-red place
Where I may muse and dedicate and dream

A Waitress

Volumes of poesy of you; and deem
It happiness to know that you are far
From any base desires as that fair star
Set in the evening magnitude of heaven.
Death takes but little, yea, your death has given
Me that deep peace, and immaculate possession
Which man may never find in earthly passion.

Good poetry, of course not, but good verse, well turned every line except the penultimate. The elision is not a happy one, and the mere suppression of the "and" does not produce a satisfying line.

Death takes but little, Death I thank for giving
Me a remembrance, and a pure possession
Of unrequited love.

And mumbling the last lines of the poem, I hastened to the café near the Luxembourg Gardens, wondering if I should find courage to ask the girl to come away to the South and live. And in fear that I should and in fear that I should not I hurried; it was the idea rather than the deed itself that tempted me; for the soul of a poet is not that of Florence Nightingale. I was truly sorry for this wistful Irish girl, and was hastening to her, I knew not why; not to show her the poem—the very thought was intolerable, as I often said on my way to her café. 'Why then am I going to her?' I asked myself in vain, saying, 'for I am not going to take her away to the South—surely not.' All the same I hastened over the bridge and along the quay Voltaire, feeling, I suppose, in some blind way, that my quest was in my own heart. She was not in the café, and sitting down at one of her tables I waited. But she did not come, and when I asked the student by me if he knew the English girl in charge of these tables, he said he did, and told me that only a transfusion of blood

could save her; and he described how blood could be taken from the arm of a healthy man and passed into the veins of the almost bloodless. 'If he does not cease to speak of blood I shall faint,' I said, and I heard some one say, 'You're very pale.' 'But can nothing be done?' I asked, and he answered that it would be difficult to find a man to give his blood, and that the operation would not be likely to save her; practically nothing could be done. He ordered some brandy for me, and I returned home thinking of her. A Waitress

Twenty years have passed, and I am thinking of her again. Poor little Irish girl! Cast out in the end by a sudden freshet on an ultimate café. Poor little heap of bones! And I bow my head and admire the romance of destiny which ordained that I, who only saw her once, should be the last to remember her. Perhaps I should have forgotten her had it not been that I wrote a poem, a poem which I now inscribe and dedicate to her nameless memory.

V

OCTAVE BARRÈS liked his friends to come to his studio, and it became the habit of the few who believed in his talent to drop in during the afternoon; and little by little I fairly knew every picture, every sketch. But one never knows everything that a painter has done, and one day, coming into the studio, I caught sight of a full-length portrait which I had never seen before. 'It was in the back room turned to the wall,' he said. 'I took it out thinking that the Russian prince who ordered the Pegasus decoration might buy it,' and he turned away, not liking to hear my praise of it; for it neither pleases a painter to hear his early works praised nor abused. 'I painted it before I knew how to paint,' The end of Marie Pellegrin

The end of Marie Pellegrin

and standing before me, his palette in his hand, he expounded his new æstheticism: that up to the beginning of the nineteenth century all painting had been done first in monochrome and then glazed, and what we know as solid painting was invented by David. One day in the Louvre he perceived something in Delacroix, something not wholly satisfactory, and this something set him thinking. It was Rubens, however, who revealed the secret! It was Rubens who taught him how to paint! On being pressed he admitted that there was danger in retracing one's steps, in beginning one's education over again; but what help was there for it, since painting was not taught in the schools?

I had heard all he had to say before, and could not change my belief that every man must live in the idiom of his time, be it good or bad. It is easy to say that we must only adopt Rubens' method and jealously guard against any infringement on our personality; but in art our personality is determined by the methods we employ, and Octave's portrait interested me more than the Pegasus decoration, or the three pink Venuses holding a basket of flowers above their heads. The portrait was crude and violent, but so was Octave Barrès; and he painted this portrait when he was a pupil of Manet's, and he painted it well, the methods of Manet being in agreement with his temperament. We are all impressionists to-day, we are eager to note down what we feel and see, and the carefully prepared rhetorical manner of Rubens was as incompatible with Octave's temperament as the manner of John Milton is with mine. There was a thought of Goya in the background, in the contrast between the grey and the black, and there was something of Manet's simplifications in the face, but these echoes were faint, nor did they matter, for they were of our time. In looking at his model he had seen and felt; he had noted

something harshly, crudely, but he noted it; and to do this is after all the main thing. His sitter had inspired him. The word 'inspired' offended him; I withdrew it; I said that he had been fortunate in his model, and he admitted that to see that thin, olive-complexioned girl with fine delicate features and blue-black hair lying close about her head like feathers—she wore her hair as a blackbird wears his wings—compelled one to paint; and after admiring the face I admired the black silk dress he had painted her in, a black silk dress covered with black lace, the grey pearls in her ears, and those upon her neck.

At first I was interested in the quality of the painting, so different from Octave's present painting, but the soul afloat in the painting appealed to me and so intimately that I forgot the picture and began to think of her, unable to associate her with any of the women one usually met in Barrès' studio, a studio beloved by women; all he stumbled upon he invited, and they began to assemble there about four in the afternoon, playing the piano, singing, talking about the painters they had sat to, showing us their shoes and garters, and he, heeding them hardly at all, walking to and fro thinking of his new painting, an archaic painting, as I have said, achieved by a system of glazing. I often wondered if his appearance counted for anything in his renunciation of modern methods, for he did not look like a modern man, but like a sixteenth-century baron; his beard and his broken nose and his hieratic air contributed to the resemblance. He wore his jersey as if it were a coat of mail. Even in his choice of a dwelling he seemed to avoid the modern, finding a studio in a street the name of which no one had ever heard before, a studio hidden behind great crumbling walls, in the middle of a plot of ground overgrown with cabbages, which he sometimes gathered for a soup, for Octave was always, as he would phrase it, 'dans une

The end of Marie Pellegrin

dèche épouvantable.' All the same he managed to keep a thoroughbred horse in the stable at the end of the garden, and this horse was saddled as soon as the light began to fail. 'Mes amis et mes amies,' he would say, 'je regrette, mais mon cheval m'attend.'

We all went out to see him mount, and many of the women thought, I am sure, that he looked like a Centaur as he rode away.

'But who was the olive-complexioned girl?' I asked myself, my thoughts dwelling upon her face as they might on a Virgin by Raphael; and remembering that Octave had taken out the portrait in the hopes that the Russian who ordered the Pegasus might buy it, the thought struck me that she might be the Prince's mistress. What might her history be? And burning to hear it, I wearied of Octave's seemingly endless chatter about his method of painting, all of which I had heard many times before, but I listened to it all again, and to propitiate him regretted that the picture was not painted in his present manner, 'for there are good things in the picture,' I said, 'and the model—you seem to have been lucky with your model.'

'Yes, she was nice to paint from, but it was difficult to get her to sit. A *concierge's* daughter—you wouldn't think it, would you?' My astonishment amused him, and he began to laugh. 'You don't know her?' he said. 'That is Marie Pellegrin,' and when I asked him where he had met her he told me, at Alphonsine's; but I did not know where Alphonsine's was.

'I'm going to dine there to-night to meet her; she's going back to Russia with the Prince. *Sacré nom!* half-past five, and I haven't washed my brushes yet! She has been staying in the Quartier Bréda on her holiday.' In answer to a question, what he meant by going to the Quartier Bréda for a holiday, he said:—

'I'll tell you all about that in the carriage.'

But no sooner were we in the carriage than he remembered that he must leave word for a woman who had promised to sit to him, and swearing that a message would not delay us for more than a few minutes he directed the coachman. The carriage stopped. 'Deuxième au-dessus de l'entresol,' cried the *concierge,* and we were shown into a drawing-room into which the lady ran from her bedroom, wrapping herself as she ran in a *peignoir* to discuss the sitting in the middle of a polished *parquet* floor. When the discussion was finished and we were back in the carriage, he remembered another appointment, and more notes were scribbled in the lodges of the *concierges,* reminding me of Marshall in the Confessions of a Young Man. Betweenwhiles Octave told me all he knew of the story of Marie Pellegrin, who I said could not be of the Montmartre kin; but Octave assured me that she was the daughter of a *concierge* on the Boulevard Extérieur and had run away from home at fifteen to dance at the Elysée Montmartre. The end of Marie Pellegrin

Sa jupe avait des trous,
Elle aimait des voyous,
Ils ont des yeux si doux.

But one day a Russian prince caught sight of her, and built her a palace in the Champs Elysées. Such was her story Octave Barrès averred as we drove to Alphonsine's —a bare outline, which he would have filled in with interesting detail if the stopping of the carriage had not interrupted his narrative. 'Here we are,' he said, seizing a bell hanging on a jangling wire. The green door in the crumbling wall opened, and I saw an undersized woman with two cats purring about her legs, and her portrait, a life-sized caricature drawn by Octave including her cats, faced me from the whitewashed wall of the hencoop. Underneath it he had written, 'Ils viennent après le mou.'

The end of Marie Pellegrin

Her garden was a gravelled space, over which a tent had been stretched from wall to wall. A waiter in a threadbare suit of black laid the tables (there were two), placing bottles of wine in front of each knife and fork, and bread in long sticks at regular intervals. He was constantly disturbed by the ringing of the bell, and had to run to the door to admit the company. Here and there I recognised faces that I had already seen in the studio: Clementine, who last year was studying the part of Elsa and this year was singing, 'La femme de feu, la cui, la cui, la cuisinière,' in a café chantant, and Marguerite Byron, who had just retreated from Russia—a disastrous campaign hers was said to have been; but the greater number of the guests were *hors concours*. Alphonsine's garden was to the aged courtesan what Chelsea Hospital is to the aged soldier. 'A sort of human garden full of the sound and colour of October,' I said and fell to thinking, what interest the woman whose portrait I had seen in Barrès' studio could find in the women about me. I passed them all in review, but search as I would I could not find among them a friend for Marie nor a lover among the men—in neither of the two stout middle-aged men with large whiskers, who had probably once been stock-brokers; nor in the withered journalist whom I heard speaking to Octave about a duel he had fought recently; nor in the little sandy Scotchman whose French was not understood by the women and whose English was nearly unintelligible to me; nor in the man who looked like a head-waiter—Alphonsine's lover. He had been a waiter, and he told us with the air of Napoleon describing Waterloo that he had 'created' a certain fashionable café on the Boulevard. Several men entered not one of whom I could attribute to Marie. And Octave continued to speak of her with indifference; she had interested him to paint, and now he hoped she would get the Russian to buy her

picture. 'She's not here,' I said. 'She'll be here presently,' Octave answered, and he went on talking to Carmen, a fair, pretty woman whom I saw every night at the Rat Mort, and to another whom I saw every morning in the Rue des Martyrs in a grey dressing-gown, marketing, a basket on her arm. But it was not till the soup-plates were being taken away that I saw a young woman dressed in black coming across the garden. The end of Marie Pellegrin

It was she, Marie Pellegrin, and so like her portrait that she seemed to have walked out of it, as the saying is, in black silk and white lace, her hair worn swathed about her shapely little head as in the portrait. She was her portrait and something more, for Octave had omitted her smile, a wayward, sad little smile in keeping with her grave face, and in keeping, too, with her voice, as melancholy and sweet as a robin's chitter. She sat at the end of the table, the centre of a group of women, and I noticed that she sometimes forgot what she was saying, and amused by her own absent-mindedness, she picked up the thread of her thought amid low, sad laughter. Her beauty brought a little mist into my eyes, and I lost sight of her, or very nearly, and I went on eating mechanically till at last the dinner came to an end, and so suddenly that before I knew it was over we were rising from table.

As we went towards the house where coffee was being served, Marie asked me if I played cards, but I excused myself, saying that I would prefer to sit and look at her; and just then a thin woman with red hair, who had arrived at the same time as Marie, and who sat next her at dinner, was introduced to me, and I was told that she was Marie's intimate friend, and that the two lived together whenever Marie returned to Montmartre. She was known as *La Glue;* her real name was Victorine. She had sat for Manet's picture of Olympe, but that was years ago. The face was thinner, but I recognised the red hair and the

The end of Marie Pellegrin

brown eyes, small eyes set closely, reminding one of *des petits verres de cognac*. Her sketch-book was being passed round, and as it came into my hands I noticed that she did not wear stays and was dressed in old grey woollen. She lit cigarette after cigarette, and leaned over Marie with her arm about her shoulder, advising her what cards to play. The game was écarté, and in a little while I saw that Marie was losing a great deal of money, and a little later I saw *La Glue* trying to persuade her away from the card-table.

'One more deal.' That deal lost her the last louis she had placed on the table. 'Some one will have to pay my cab,' she said.

We were going to the Elysée Montmartre, and Alphonsine lent her a couple of louis, *pour passer sa soirée*, and we all went away in carriages, the little horses straining up the steep streets; the plumes of the women's hats floating over the carriage hoods. Marie was in one of the front carriages, and was waiting for us on the high steps leading from the street to the *bal*.

'It's my last night,' she said, 'the last night I shall see the Elysée for many a month.'

'You'll soon be back again?'

'You see, I have been offered five hundred thousand francs to go to Russia for three years. Fancy, three years without seeing the Elysée,' and she looked round as an angel might look upon Paradise out of which she is about to be driven. 'The trees are beautiful,' she said, 'they're like a fairy tale'; and that is exactly what they were like, rising into the summer darkness, unnaturally green above the electric lights. In the middle of a circle of white globes the orchestra played upon an *estrade*, and every one whirled his partner as if she were a top. 'I always sit in the angle,' she said, and was about to invite me to come and sit with her, when her attention was distracted

from me by voices cheering and voices whispering: 'That's Marie Pellegrin.' The dancers flocked at her approach, her waiter began to draw aside tables and chairs, and in a few minutes she was sitting under her trees, she and *La Glue* together, Marie distributing absinthe, brandy, and cigarettes, unsuspicious of the idea that was taking shape and that suddenly formed into a procession headed by the manager, bearing a basket of flowers. On Marie's acceptance of the flowers a great cheer went up, and afterwards many voices were heard crying: 'Vive Marie Pellegrin, la reine de l'Elysée.' The end of Marie Pellegrin

The music began again, and the people rushed to see a quadrille where two women were kicking off men's hats; and while watching them I heard that a display of fireworks was being arranged by special request, the news having got about that this was her last night at the Elysée. It was not long after that a swishing sound was heard and the rocket rose high into the dark midnight sky; the star fell a little way, then burst, changing from turquoise blue to ruby red, the falling fire beautiful as the colour of flowers, roses and, of all, tulips whilst Marie, my eyes never left her, stood watching, lost in ecstasy, till the last sparks vanished.

'Doesn't she look like my picture?' said Octave.

'You seemed to have divined her soul.'

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. 'I'm not a psychologist, I am a painter. But I must get a word with her,' and with a carelessness that was almost insolence, he pushed his way into the crowd, calling to her. His indifference to her charm put me past my patience and I walked through the crowd asking myself if he had always been so indifferent. In a little while they returned.

'I'll do my best,' I heard her say, and she ran back to join her companions.

The end of Marie Pellegrin

'I suppose you've seen enough of the Elysée?'

'Ah! qu'elle est jolie ce soir; et elle fera joliment marcher le Russe.'

Octave did not notice that he had said anything to jar my feelings; he was thinking of his portrait, and presently he said that he was sorry she was going to Russia.

'I should like to begin another portrait, now that I have learned to paint.'

'Do you think she'll go to Russia?'

'Yes, she'll go there; but she'll come back one of these days, and I'll get her to sit again. It is extraordinary how little is known of the art of painting; the art is forgotten. The old masters did perfectly in two days what we spend weeks fumbling at. In two days Rubens finished his *grisaille*, and the glazing was done with certainty, with skill, with ease in half an hour! He could get more depth of colour with a glaze than any one can to-day, however much paint is put on the canvas. The old masters had method, now there's none. One brush as well as another, rub the paint up or down, it doesn't matter so long as the canvas is covered. Manet began it, and Cézanne has—well, filed the petition: painting is bankrupt.'

I listened to him a little wearily, for I had heard all he was saying many times before, but Octave always talked of what was uppermost in his mind, and this evening he wanted to talk of painting, not of Marie, and I was glad when we came to the spot where our ways parted.

'You know that the Russian is coming to the studio to-morrow; I hope he'll buy the portrait.'

'I hope he will,' I said. 'I'd buy it myself if I could afford it.'

'I'd prefer you to have something I have done since, unless it be the woman you're after. But one minute. You're coming to sit to me the day after to morrow?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'll come.'

'And then I'll be able to tell you if he has bought the picture.'

The end of Marie Pellegrin

Three days afterwards I asked Octave on the threshold if he had sold the portrait? He told me nothing was definitely settled yet. Soon after we heard that Marie had gone to St. Petersburg with the Prince, and this was the last news I had of her for many months. But a week rarely passed without something happening to remind me of her. One day a book of travels in Siberia opened at a passage telling how a boy belonging to a tribe of Asiatic savages was taken from his deserts, where he lay deserted and dying, and brought to Moscow. The gentleman who found him adopted and educated him, and the reclaimed savage became in time a fashionable young man about town, betraying no trace of his origin till he met one of his tribe come to Moscow to sell skins. The smell of the skins awakened a longing for the desert in the reclaimed savage, who fell into melancholy moods that his adopted father tried to overcome with presents of money. Neither money nor affection soothed his homesickness; he disappeared, and was not heard of for years, until one day a caravan came back with the news of a civilised man among the savages. He had betrayed himself by speaking French, but on being questioned he denied any knowledge of French, saying that he had never been to St. Petersburg, and did not wish to go there. What was this story, I asked myself, but the story of Marie Pellegrin, who, when weary of Russian princes and palaces, returned for her holiday to the Quartier Bréda?

A few days afterwards I heard in Barrès' studio that she had escaped from Russia; and that evening I went to Alphonsine's to dinner, hoping to see her. But none was there except Clementine and the two stockbrokers; and I waited eagerly for news of her, not liking to mention her

The end of Marie Pellegrin

name, and the dreary dinner was nearly over before her name was mentioned. She was ill, very ill, but not dying, and Alphonsine gave me her address. She lived higher up on the same side as the Cirque Fernando, nearly facing the Elysée Montmartre. The number I could inquire out, she said, and I went away in a cab up the steep and stony Rue des Martyrs, noticing the café and then the *brasserie*, and a little higher up the fruitseller and the photographer, for when the mind is at stress one notices the casual. The first house we stopped at happened to be the right one, the *concierge* said, 'the fourth floor,' and as I went upstairs I thought of *La Glue*, of her untidy dress and her red hair, and a moment after she asked me into an unfurnished drawing-room.

'She's talking of going to the Elysée to-night. There are three or four of us here. You know them. Clementine Poutier and Marguerite Byron?' She mentioned some other names that I did not remember, and opening a door, cried, 'Marie, here's a visitor for you, a gentleman from Alphonsine's. You know, dear, the Englishman, Octave Barrès' friend.'

She gave me her hand, and I held it a long while.

'Comme les Anglais sont gentils. Dès qu'on est malade——'

I don't think Marie finished the sentence, if she did I did not hear her; but I remember quite well that she spoke of my distaste for cards.

'You didn't play that night at Alphonsine's when I lost all my money. You looked at Victorine's drawings. She has done some better ones. Go and look at them, and let's finish our game. Then I'll talk to you. So you heard about me at Alphonsine's? They say I'm very ill, don't they? But now that I've come back I'll soon get well. I'm always well in Montmartre, amn't I, Victorine?' 'Nous ne sommes pas installés encore,' Marie

said, referring to the scarcity of furniture, and to the clock and candelabra which stood on the floor. But if there were too few chairs, there was a good deal of money and jewellery among the bed-clothes; and Marie toyed with this jewellery during the games. She wore large lace sleeves, and the thin arms showed delicate and slight when she raised them to change her ear-rings. Her small beauty, fashioned like an ivory, contrasted with the coarse features about her, and the little nose with beautifully shaped nostrils, and of all the mouth, fading at the ends into faint indecisions. Every now and then a tenderness came over her face. 'Octave,' I said to myself, 'saw the essential in her; he had painted herself—her soul as well as her body, though he denied it twenty times a day.' Marie's soul rose up like a water-flower in her eyes, and then the soul sank out of sight, and I saw another Marie, *une grue*, playing cards with five others from Alphonsine's, losing her money and her health. A bottle of absinthe stood on a beautiful Empire table that her prince had given her, and Bijou, Clementine's little dog, slept on an embroidered cushion. The little bitch was going to have puppies, and whilst stroking her silky coat, thinking of her coming trouble, I heard Clementine's voice raised above the others, and heard her say that the cards had not been fairly dealt. *La Glue* told Clementine that she was not wanted—'qu'elle ferait bien de débarrasser les planches,' a vulgar phrase that her coarse voice made seem still more vulgar. I heard further accusations, and among them the plaintive voice of Marie begging of me not to believe what they said. The women caught each other by the hair, tore at each other's faces, Marie raised herself up in bed and fell back crying. For a moment it seemed as if they were going to sit down to cards again, but suddenly everybody snatched her own money and then everybody snatched at the money within

The end of Marie Pellegrin

her reach; and, calling each other thieves, they struggled through the door, and down the staircase at last, followed by Bijou, who, conceiving suddenly that she was about to be left behind, jumped from her chair and ran after her mistress.

'Help me to find my brooch,' Marie said, and I saw her faint hands turning over the bed-clothes. Some jewellery was missing, a brooch and some pearls as well as all her money. She fell back among the pillows unable to speak, and very soon the little lace handkerchief was soaking. In answer to my questions I learnt that the stolen money was paid to her by a *fournisseur* in the *Quartier* for her *garniture de cheminée*, and of this money, two thousand francs, only a few francs were found among the bed-clothes, enough, she said, 'Pour passer ma soirée.' She begged me to go to the dressmaker to inquire for the gown that had been promised for ten o'clock, saying, 'I shall be at the Elysée by eleven. *Au revoir, au revoir, cher cœur!* Let me rest a little now. I shall see you to-night. You know where I sit, in the left-hand corner; they always keep those seats for me.'

Her eyes closed, she was soon asleep, and her calm and reasonable sleep reminded me of her agitated and unreasonable life; and looking at her, at this poor butterfly lying all alone, robbed by her friends and associates, I remembered that, having found a few francs amid the bed-clothes, overlooked by them, she had said: 'Assez pour passer ma soirée.'

The Prince might be written to; but he, no doubt, was weary of her inability to lead a respectable life, and knew that if he were to send her money, it would go whither his last gift had gone. 'If she ends selling fried potatoes on the streets it will be her own fault,' he would say. But would such a decadence be her fault? Octave would answer, 'Qu'est-ce que cela peut nous faire, une fille plus

ou moins fichue. Ah si je pouvais réussir un peu dans ce sacré métier!' 'His talk was always superficial, but his picture of her is something more than mere sarcasm,' I said to myself, and fell to thinking of her intention to go to the Elysée. The end of Marie Pellegrin

It was just six o'clock, she wanted her dress by ten, so I must hasten away to the dressmaker at once; it might be wiser not—she lay in bed peaceful and beautiful; at the Elysée she would be drinking absinthe and smoking cigarettes until three in the morning. But I had promised and she would not forgive me if I did not redeem my promise.

The dressmaker said that Madame Pellegrin would have her dress by nine, and at half-past ten I was at the Elysée waiting for her, walking round the gravel path, wearying of the unnatural green of the chestnut leaves and of the high kicking in the quadrilles. Now and then there would be a rush of people, and then the human tide would disperse again under the trees among the zinc chairs and tables, for the enjoyment of books and cigars. I noticed that Marie's friends spent that evening in the angle under the tall trees; but they did not call me to drink with them, for they suspected that I knew whence came the money they were spending.

After waiting for an hour or more, I left the place discontented, thinking that in spite of my admonitions the dressmaker had disappointed her, or that the cause of her absence might be a sudden flow of blood. I would inquire in the morning, but remembering suddenly that I was breakfasting with Octave, and sitting to him in the afternoon, I decided to put off my inquiries till the evening. We were in the middle of the sitting, when we heard footsteps on the stairs.

'Only some women,' he said; 'I've a mind not to open the door.'

'But do,' I said, for I felt sure they were Marie's

The end of Marie Pellegrin

friends. It was so, and they had come with the news that she had been found dead on her balcony, dressed in the gown that had just come home from the dressmaker.

I hoped that Octave would not try to pass the matter off with some ribald jest, and I was surprised at his gravity. 'Even Octave,' I said, 'refrains, *on ne blague pas la mort.*'

'What I don't understand is the balcony,' he said. 'What was she doing on the balcony?'

'I suppose she went out to look at the fireworks; they begin about eleven.'

It was one of the women who had spoken, and we stood subdued and silent, gazing at her picture.

VI

La Butte

TO-MORROW I shall drive to breakfast, seeing Paris continuously unfolding, prospect after prospect, green swards, white buildings, villas engarlanded; to-day I drive to breakfast through the white torridities of Rue Blanche, seeing the back of the coachman growing drowsier: it would have rounded off into sleep long ago, had it not been for the great paving-stones that swing the vehicle from side to side in the Rue Blanche; and feeling that the poor little fainting animal would not be able to climb the Rue Lepic, to draw me to the Butte, I dismissed the carriage, half out of pity, and a wish to study the Rue Lepic, so typical is it of the upper lower classes. In the Rue Blanche there are *portes-cochères,* but in the Rue Lepic the narrow doors, partially grated, open on narrow passages, at the end of which, squeezed between the wall and the stairs, are small rooms where *concierges* sit, *en camisole,* amid vegetables and sewing. The wooden blinds flung back on the faded yellow walls reveal a strip of white bed-curtain and a heavy middle-aged woman looking into a tin pail

in which a rabbit lies steeping; her man, a cobbler, sits hammering in the window, and the smell of leather follows the passenger for several steps. A few doors up the street a girl sits trimming a bonnet. The girl is pale with the exhausting heat. At the corner of the next street there is a *marchand de vins*. Opposite a dirty little *charbonnier* stands in front of a little hole which he calls his *boutique*. A group of women in discoloured *peignoirs* and heavy carpet slippers go by with baskets on their arms. Everywhere traces of meagre and humble life, but nowhere the demented wretch so common in our London streets —the man with bare feet, the furtive and frightened creature, gnawing a crust and drawing a black, tattered shirt about his consumptive chest. La Butte

The asphalt is melting, the reverberation of the stones intolerable, my feet ache and burn. At the top of the street I enter a still poorer neighbourhood, a still steeper street, but so narrow that the shadow has already begun to draw out on the pavements. At the top of the street is a stairway, and above the stairway a grassy knoll, and above the knoll a windmill lifts its black and motionless arms. For the mill is now a mute ornament, a sign for the *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*.

As the street ascends it grows whiter, and at the Butte it is empty of everything except the white rays of noon. Some bygone architecture attracts my attention, a dilapidated façade and broken pillars; and standing in the midst of ruined gardens, circled by high walls crumbling and white, and looking through a broken gateway, I see a fountain splashing, but nowhere inhabitants that correspond to these houses—only a workwoman, a grisette and a child crying in the dust. But grand folk must at some time have lived here, and I fell to wondering if the hill-top had once been country.

On my left an iron gateway swinging on rusty hinges

La Butte leads on to a large terrace, at the end of which is a row of houses, and it is in one of these houses that my friend lives. As I pull the bell I think that the pleasure of seeing him is worth the ascent, and my thoughts float back over the long time I have known Paul. From the beginning of our lives, that is to say since we began to write. The servant comes to the door with a baby in her arms, another baby! and tells me that Monsieur et Madame are gone out for the day. No breakfast, no smoke, no talk about literature, only a long walk back through the roasting sun—cabs are not found at these heights. It is no consolation to be told that I should have written and warned them I was coming. But I must rest, and ask leave to sit down. Ah, here is the servant bringing wine and a siphon. She tells me that the study is better to sit in than the front room, which is true, for in the front room the white rays pierce through the chinks, and lie like sword-blades along the floor. A kindly girl, I thank her, for the study is pleasant and the wine so refreshing that I begin to notice that the house is built on the sheer hillside. Fifty feet—more than that—a hundred feet under me are gardens caught somehow in the hollow of the hill, and planted with trees, tall trees, for swings hang out of them, else I should not know they were tall. From this window they look like shrubs, and beyond the houses that surround these gardens Paris spreads over the plain, a dim reddish mass, like a gigantic brickfield, and far away a line of hills, and above them a sky as pale and faint as the blue ash of a cigarette.

I cannot look upon this city without emotion; it has been my life, for did I not come hither in my youth like a lover, relinquishing myself to Paris, never extending once my adventure beyond Bas Meudon, Ville d'Avray, Fontainebleau, thereby acquiring a fatherland more true because deliberately chosen than the one birth impertinently

imposed? *Un pays ami* is truly a delicate delight—a country La Butte where we may go when daily life is becoming too daily, sure of finding there all the sensations of home, plus those of irresponsible caprice. In Montmartre I find a literature that is mine without being wholly mine, a literature that is like an exquisite mistress, in whom I find consolation for all the commonplaces of life! The comparison is true, for although I know these French folk better than all else in the world, they must ever remain my holiday rather than my daily life. It is strange that this should be so, for in truth I know them as they live their lives from hour to hour. There is Paul. I know the habitual colour and every varying shade of his mind, yet I may not make him the hero of a novel. I know when he rises and how long he takes to dress, and what he wears. I know the breakfast he eats, and the streets down which he passes—their shape, their colour, their smell. I know exactly how life has come to him, and how it has affected him, and remember the day I met him in London! He came to London to meet *une petite fermière*, with whom he had become infatuated when he went to Normandy to finish his novel. They were married in London, and this is their abode. Yonder is the *salle-à-manger*, furnished with a nice sideboard in oak, and six chairs to match; on the left is their bedroom, and the baby's cot was a present from *le grand, le cher et illustre maître.*

Paul and Mrs. Paul struggle out of the bed-clothes about twelve; they loiter over breakfast and over *les petits verres.* Some friends come in, and about four Paul begins to write his article, which he finishes or nearly finishes before dinner. The twain loiter over dinner until it is time for Paul to take his article to the newspaper, and he loiters in the printing office or the café till his proof is ready, and when that is corrected he loiters in the many cafés of the Faubourg Montmartre, smoking interminable cigars,

La Butte finding his way back to the Butte between three and four in the morning. Paul is fat and of an equable temperament. He believes in naturalism all the day, particularly after breakfast, over *les petits verres*. He never said an unkind word to any one or of any one, and I am sure never thought one. In the olden days he was fond of grisettes, but since he married he has thought of none but his wife. *Il écrit des choses raides*, but no woman ever had a better husband. And now you know him as well as I do. Here are his own books: *The End of Lucie Pellegrin*, the story that I have just finished writing. How is this? the reader asks, and I answer that I undertook to write one of Paul's stories, the best he ever wrote, because when I spoke to him of Marie Pellegrin, he was surprised to hear her name was Marie; he thought it was Lucie, and then I learnt that he had never been to Alphonsine's, and had told her story as he had picked it up from the women who turned into the Rat Mort at midnight for a *soupe à l'oignon*. It was a pity, he said, that I was not in Paris when he was writing it, for I could have told him her story more sympathetically than the women in the Rat Mort, supplying him with many pretty details that they had not noticed or had forgotten. It would have been easy for me to have done this, for Marie Pellegrin is enshrined in my memory like a miniature in a case. I press a spring, and I see the beautifully shaped little head, the pale olive face, the dark eyes, and the blue-black hair. Marie Pellegrin is really part of my own story, and that is why I have no scruple about telling it: to entertain any would be absurd. I was her friend; I watched by her death-bed and am thereby her natural historian. Who will not accept my title to her story as valid? and who will not acquit me of plagiarism?

I see the Rougon-Macquart series, each volume presented to him by the author, Goncourt, Huysmans,

Duranty, Céard, Maupassant, Hennique, etc., in a word, La Butte the works of those with whom I grew up, those who tied my first literary pinafore round my neck. But here are *Les Moralités Légendaires* by Jules Laforgue, and *Les Illuminations* by Rimbaud. Paul has not read these books; they were sent to him, I suppose, for review, and put away on the bookcase, all uncut.

And this sets me thinking that one knows very little of any generation except one's own. True that I know a little more of the symbolists than Paul, for I am the youngest of the naturalists, the eldest of the symbolists. The naturalists affected the art of painting, the symbolists the art of music; and since the symbolists there has been no artistic manifestation—the game is played out. When Huysmans and Paul and myself are dead, it will be as impossible to write a naturalistic novel as to revive the megatherium. Where is Hennique? And when Monet is dead it will be as impossible to paint an impressionistic picture as to revive the ichthyosaurus. A little world of ideas goes by every five-and-twenty years, and the next that emerges will be incomprehensible to me, as Monet was to Corot. . . . Was the young generation knocking at the door of the Opéra Comique last night? If the music was the young generation, I am sorry for it. A friend was with me, and he left, but for different reasons: he suffered in his ears; it was my intelligence that suffered. Why, I asked him, did the flute play the chromatic scale when the boy said, 'Il faut que cela soit un grand navire'? and why were all the 'cellos in motion when the girl answered, 'Cela ou bien tout autre chose'? I suffered because of the divorce of the orchestra and singers, uniting, perhaps, at the end of the scene. The singers spoke through the music, their voices moving up and down, it is true, league after league of it. A chord is heard in *Lohengrin* to sustain Elsa's voice, a

La Butte motive is heard to attract attention to a certain part of the story, and when Ortrud shrieks out the motive of the secret at the church door, the method may be criticised as crude, but the crudest melodrama is better than this sickly wandering from grey to mauve. But maybe I shall think differently one of these days, and while pondering on the music of the younger generation, remembering the perplexity it had caused me, the voice of a vagrant singing on the other side of the terrace reaches me :—

Moi, je m'en fous, Je reste dans mon trou,

and I say, 'I hear the truth in the mouth of the vagrant minstrel, one who possibly has no *trou* wherein to lay his head.' 'Et mon aussi, je reste dans mon trou, et mon trou est assez beau pour que j'y reste, car mon trou est'—Richard Wagner. My *trou* is the Ring—the Sacrosanct Ring. Again I fall to musing. The intention of Liszt and Wagner and Strauss was to write music. However long Wotan might ponder on Mother Earth, the moment comes when the violins begin to sing, and then the spring uncloses in the orchestra and the lovers fly to the woods! . . .

The vagrant continued his wail, and forgetful of Paul, forgetful of all things but the philosophy of the minstrel of the Butte, I picked my way down the tortuous streets repeating :—

Moi, je m'en fous, Je reste dans mon trou.

VII

Spent Love

I AM going to see dear and affectionate friends. The train would take me to them, that droll little *chemin de fer de ceinture,* but it seems a pity to miss the Gare St. Lazare, its Sunday morning tumult of Parisians starting with their mistresses and their wives for a favourite suburb. I never run up these wide stairways leading to

the great wide galleries full of bookstalls (charming yellow notes), and pierced with little wickets painted round with blue, without experiencing a sensation of happy lightness—a light-headedness that I associate with the month of May in Paris. But the tramway that passes through the Place de la Concorde goes as far as Passy, and though I love the droll little *chemin de fer de ceinture,* I love this tramway better, for it speeds along the quays between the Seine and the garden of the Champs Elysées, through miles of chestnut bloom. The roadway is chequered nearly all the way with shadows of chestnut leaves, and in a faint delirium of the senses I catch at a bloom, cherish it for a moment, and cast it away. The plucky little steamboats are now making for the landing-places, stemming the current. I love this sprightly river better than the melancholy Thames, along whose banks saturnine immoralities flourish like bulrushes! Behold the white architecture, the pillars, the balustraded steps, the domes in the blue air, the monumented swards! Paris, like all pagan cities, is full of statues. A little later we roll past parks secluded within high walls. At last the streets of Passy begin to appear, mean streets, like London streets. I like them not; but the railway station is jolly, a little railway station like a house of cards under toy trees, with the train steaming out into a country like the season's millinery.

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It is pleasant to notice everything in Paris: the flymen asleep on their box-seats, the little horses dozing beneath the chestnut-trees, the bloused workmen leaning over a green-painted table in an arbour, drinking wine at sixteen sous the litre, the villas of Auteuil, rich woodwork, rich iron railings. The summer hushes about villas engarlanded. Auteuil is like a flower, its petals opening out to the kiss of the air, its roots feeling for way among the rich earth. Thoughts come unbidden in France, my thoughts

Spent Love sing together, and I hardly know what they are singing. My thoughts are singing like the sun; do not ask me their meaning; they mean as much and as little as the sun that I am part of—the gay sun of France that I shall enjoy for thirty days, for May takes me to Paris and of all to the dear and affectionate friends who await me at Auteuil. June takes me away from them. But June is far away, and there is the villa amid the engarlanding trees, and my friend, dressed in pale yellow, in front of his easel, the sunlight playing through the foliage, leaping through the rich, long grass. A little girl of four, his model, sits among the rhododendrons, her frock and cap impossibly white under the great, gaudy greenery.

Year after year the same affectionate welcome, the same spontaneous welcome in this garden of rhododendrons and chestnut bloom. I would linger in the garden, but I may not, for breakfast is ready *et il ne faut pas faire manquer la messe à Madame. La messe!* How gentle the word is, much gentler than our word, mass, and it shocks us hardly at all to see an old lady going away in her carriage *pour entendre la messe.* Religion purged of faith is a pleasant, almost a pretty thing. Some fruits are better dried than fresh; religion is such a one, and religion, when nothing is left of it but the pleasant, familiar habit, may be defended, for were it not for our habits life would be unrecorded, it would be all on the flat, as we would say if we were talking about a picture, without perspective. Our habits are our stories, and tell whence we have come and how we came to be what we are. There, quite a pretty exordium; but I have no time to think the matter out, for here is the doctor lifting his skull-cap, and with the beautiful dignity that comes of goodness of heart. His goodness is a pure gift, existing independent of formula, a thing in itself, like Manet's painting. It was Degas who said, 'A man whose profile no one ever saw,' and the

aphorism reminds us of the beautiful goodness that floats over his face, a light from Paradise. But why from Paradise? Paradise is an ugly ecclesiastical invention, and angels are an ugly Hebrew invention. It is unpardonable to think of angels in Auteuil; an angel is a prig compared to the dear doctor. An angel has wings, and so has this admirable chicken, a bird that was grown for the use of the table, produced like a vegetable. A dear bird that was not allowed to run about and weary itself as our helpless English chicken is; it lived to get fat without acquiring any useless knowledge or desire of life; it became a capon in tender years, and then a pipe was introduced into its beak and it was fed by machinery until it could hardly walk, till it could only stagger to its bed, and there it lay in happy digestion until the hour came for it to be crammed again. So did it grow without knowledge or sensation or feeling of life, moving gradually, peacefully, towards its predestined end—a delicious repast! What better end, what greater glory than to be a fat chicken? The carcases of sheep that hang in butchers' shops are beginning to horrify the conscience of Europe. To cut a sheep's throat is an offensive act, but to clip out a bird's tongue with a long pair of scissors made for the purpose is genteel. It is true that the bird beats its wings for a few moments, but we must not allow ourselves to be disturbed by a mere flutter of feathers. Man is merciful, and saved the fowl from life. The fowl grew like an asparagus! And talking of asparagus, here are some from Argenteuil thick as umbrellas and so succulent! A word about the wine. French red wines in England always seem to taste like ink, but in France they taste of the sun. Melons are better in June—that one comes, no doubt, from Algeria. It is, however, the kind I like best, the rich, red melon that one eats only in France; a thing of the moment, unrememberable; but the chicken will never be forgotten;

twenty years hence I shall be talking of a chicken, that in becoming a fat chicken acquired twenty years of immortality—which of us will acquire as many?

As we rise slowly from table the doctor calls me into his study: he would give me a cigar before he bids me good-bye; and having lighted it I follow my friend to the studio at the end of the garden, to that airy drawing-room which he has furnished in pale yellow and dark blue. On the walls are examples of the great modern masters—Manet and Monet. That view of a plain by Monet flows like a Japanese water-colour: the horizon evaporating in the low light, the spire of a church still visible in the haze. But look at the celebrated *Leçon de Danse* by Degas. A dancer descends the spiral staircase; her legs only are visible and the staircase cuts the picture in twain. On the right is the dancing master; something has gone wrong, for he holds out his hands in entreaty; a group of dancers are seated on chairs in the foreground; their mothers cover their shoulders with shawls—good mothers, anxious for their daughters' welfare, for their advancement in life.

This picture betrays a mind curious, inquisitive and mordant; and that plaid shawl is as unexpected as an adjective of Flaubert's. A portrait by Manet hangs close by, large, permanent and mysterious as Nature. Degas is more intellectual, but how little is intellect, compared with a gift like Manet's. Yesterday I was in the Louvre, and when wearied with examination and debate—I had gone there on a special errand—I turned into the Salle Carrée for relaxation, and there wandered about, waiting to be attracted. Long ago the Mona Lisa was my adventure, and I remember how Titian's "Entombment" enchanted me; another year I delighted in the smooth impartiality of a Terburg interior; but this year Rembrandt's portrait of his wife held me at gaze. The face tells of her woman's

life, her woman's weakness, and she seems conscious of the burden of her sex, and of the burden of her own special lot—she is Rembrandt's wife, a servant, a satellite, a watcher. The emotion that this picture awakens is almost physical. It gets at you like music, like a sudden breath of perfume. When I approach, her eyes fade into brown shadow, but when I withdraw they begin to tell her story. The mouth is no more than a little shadow, but it speaks a wistful tenderness! The colour of the face was got with white, faintly tinted with bitumen; in the cheeks some rose madder comes through the yellow, that is all. She wears a fur jacket, but the fur was no trouble to Rembrandt; he did not strive for realism. It is fur, and fur is enough. Grey pearls hang in her ears; she wears a brooch; a hand at the bottom of the picture passes out of the frame. Chin and hand and arm are moulded without display of knowledge, as Nature moulds. The picture seems as if it had been breathed upon the canvas. Did not a great poet once say that God breathed into Adam? Even so it is here. The other pictures seem dry and insignificant, when compared with this portrait, and, of all, a certain literary celebrity whose tedious smile I once heard excused on the ground that she is only smiling at the nonsense she hears talked about her. Her witty apologist was not Pater, who described her smile as mysterious, an adjective that writers welcome when they are not clear as to what they wish to say: hesitating would be better. But why trouble to find an adjective to express something that all the world is weary of? The Mona Lisa is a sort of riddle, an acrostic, a poetical decoction, a ballade, a rondel, a villanelle or ballade with double burden, a sestina. And being literature in intention rather than painting, she has drawn round her many poets, inspiring many mediocre verses, for which we must forgive her for the sake of her passage some

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five-and-twenty years ago (I am not good at dates) out of a mysterious misuse of oil paint into the immortality of Pater's prose. Degas is wilting already, and year after year he will continue to wither, until one day some great prose writer will arise and transfer his spirit into its proper medium—literature. The Mona Lisa and the Leçon de Danse are intellectual pictures, they were painted with the brains rather than with the temperaments, and what is any intellect compared with a gift like Manet's! Leonardo made roads, Degas makes witticisms. I heard one yesterday that delighted me far more than any road would, for I have given up bicycling. Somebody was saying he did not like Daumier, and Degas preserved silence for a long while. 'If you were to show Raphael a Daumier,' he said at last, 'he would admire it, he would take off his hat, but if you were to show him a Cabanel, he would say with a sigh, "That is my fault!"'

My reverie is broken by the piano; my friend is playing, and it is pleasant to listen to music in this airy studio. But there are women waiting for me, and I must see the women whom I see every time I go to Paris. Too much time has already been spent in the studio—I must go.

But whither shall I go? My thoughts strike through the little streets of Passy, measuring the distance between Passy and the Arc de Triomphe. For a moment I think that I might sit under the trees and watch the people returning from the races. Were she not dead I might stop at her little house in the fortifications among the lilac-trees. There is her portrait by Manet on the wall, the very toque she used to wear. How wonderful the touch is; and while thinking of the extraordinary handicraft, I fall to thinking of his studio at the moment when a tall fair woman, Mary Laurant, entered it—the daughter of a peasant, and the mistress of all the great men of that

time—perhaps I should have said of all the distinguished men. I used to call her *toute la lyre.*

The last time I saw her we talked about Manet, and she told me that every year she took the first lilac to lay upon his grave. Is there, I wonder, one of her many lovers who foregoes an idle hour to lay flowers on her grave? What stays in our memory of her was her pleasure in life, and her desire to get all the pleasure, and her consciousness of her desire to enjoy every moment of her life. Evans, the great dentist, settled two thousand a year upon her, and how angry he was one night on meeting Manet on the staircase. In order to rid herself of the American she invited him to dinner, intending to plead a sick headache after dinner, saying that she must lie down. As soon as her guest was gone she took off the *peignoir* which hid her ball dress, and signed to Manet, who was waiting at the street corner, with her handkerchief. But as they went downstairs together whom should they meet but the dentist *qui avait oublié ses carnets.* Evans was so disappointed at meeting his beautiful but deceitful mistress that he didn't visit her again for three or four days, but his anger mattered nothing, for another lover had settled two thousand a year upon Mary; and having now four thousand a year to spend, she devoted herself to the love and conversation of those who wrote books and music, and painted pictures.

We humans are more complicated than animals; we love through the imagination, at least the imagination stimulates the senses, acting as a sort of adjuvant. The barmaid falls in love with No. 1, because he wipes a glass better than No. 2, and Mary fell in love with Coppée on account of his sonnet *le lys,* and she grew indifferent when he wrote poems like "La nourrice" or "Le petit épicier de Montrouge qui cassait le sucre avec mélancolie." And it was when this love-story was at wane that I became

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a competitor. But one day Madame Albazi came to Manet's studio, a splendid creature in a carriage drawn by Russian horses from the Steppes, so she said; but who can tell whether a horse comes from the Steppes or from the horse-dealers? Nor does it matter when the lady is so extraordinarily attractive that she inspires the thought—a mistress for Attila! That is not exactly how Manet saw her; but she looks like that even in his pastel. In it she holds a tortoiseshell fan spread across her bosom, and it was on one of the sticks of the fan that he signed his name, for a great painter always knows where to sign his pictures, and he never signs twice in the same place. She had come to tell Manet that she could not sit that day, she was going to the Bois, and after some conversation she asked me and a young man who happened to be in Manet's studio at the time to go there with her, and we went thither, drawn by the Russian horses, the young man and I pondering which the Comtesse would choose for her lover. We played hard for her; but that day I was wiser than he; I let him talk and recite poetry, and jingle out all the aphorisms that he had been collecting for years, feeling his witticisms were in vain.

It was at the corner of the Rue Pontière that we got rid of him. Some days afterwards she sat to Manet. The pastel now hangs in the room of a friend of mine: I bought it for him, for the picture of a woman one knows is never so agreeable a companion as the picture of a woman one has never seen. One's memory and the painter's vision are in conflict, and I like to think of the long delicate nose, and the sparkling eyes, and a mouth like red fruit. The pastel once belonged to me, it used to hang in my rooms, for with that grace of mind which never left him, Manet said one day, 'I always promised you a picture,' and searching among the pastels that lined the wall he

turned to me saying, 'Now I think that this one comes to you by right.' When I fled from Paris hurriedly and left my things to be sold, the Comtesse came to the sale and bought her picture. She sold it years afterwards to a picture-dealer, tempted by the price that Manet's pictures were fetching, and hearing that it was for sale, I bought it, as I have said, for a friend of mine. I have told the whole story, forgetting nothing except that it was years afterwards, when I had written 'Les Confessions d'un jeune Anglais' in the *Revue Indépendante*, that Mary Laurant asked me—oh! she was very enterprising, she sent the editor of the *Revue* to me; an appointment was made, and I found her sitting with Dujardin in a garden. 'Now, my dear Dujardin, you must go.'

Mary was beautiful, but she liked her lovers to admire her wit, and when I asked her why she did not leave Evans, the great dentist, after he had made the settlement, she said, 'That would be a base thing to do. I content myself by deceiving him,' and then, while discussing the difficult question of lovers, she said, 'I am not a woman, *qu'on trousse dans un jardin*,' a phrase difficult to render in English, one that a French professor might set for translation in an examination paper; and I am baffled for the moment. 'Why not "truss" or "untruss"?' cries somebody, and while the professor ponders what answer he will make to this pertinent question, I will tell that Mary's garden was a nook at the fortifications, hidden among lilac-bushes, and that on the occasion of this visit to her house the thought came into her mind that she would like to show me her bedroom, whither we went, and where we remained talking, myself uncertain whether to take her in my arms or refrain. A young man of thirty should be sure of himself always, but he is not; and we strained to keep the conversation going till Mary wearied, and with a touch of annoyance in her

voice said, 'I don't think I'll detain you any longer in my bedroom.' At these words my heart misgave me altogether; I felt that I was a fool, yet I did not take her in my arms. Was it shyness that held me back? Yes, and something else. My admiration for Mary was carried over from the days in Manet's studio, and in ten years some of our admiration for a woman's beauty passes out of the body into the mind: love is easily intellectualised. I give all the reasons, and in giving them one after the other I approach the true reason. Mary was guilty of an indiscretion when she said that she was expecting Mallarmé (whom I knew to be her present lover), and the thought of the little man starting forth joyously from his grubby little flat in the Rue de Rome was an unpleasant one. I could think of her only in connection with Mallarmé; the thought of waiting to receive him after the betrayal contributed to my irresolution that afternoon, and, returning to the garden, we continued an aimless conversation until he arrived, bringing with him a pastry. The pastry jarred, and rejoicing in my abstinence, I bethought myself of them eating their dinner, falling little by little out of conceit with an adventure that I desired ardently once—ten years ago. . . . Mary and Mallarmé accompanied me to the station, and next day she wrote asking me to come and see her; but when I arrived her servant said that she had gone on to the Pavillon d'Armenonville and that I was to meet her there. 'My lyre to replace Mallarmé's!' I said, and gave up the pursuit of this beautiful woman regretfully. A year after she had fallen in love with a young musician, to whom she left all the dentist's money.

My thoughts run upon women; women are the legitimate objects of men's thoughts. While we sit in smoking-rooms boring each other with the words "demonetization of silver" on our lips, other words are in our hearts.

Woman is man's serious occupation, and to make a start Spent Love
once more into the almost unknown country of sincerity, I will confess that we forget women for a little while when we are thinking about Art, but only for a while; all else is trivial, especially Brahm's music, which my friend is now trying to play, and I fall to thinking which of the women I have known in years past would interest me most to visit.

At the end of this late spring day my walk from Passy to the Champs Elysées will be crowded with meditations and memories, unexpected and yet familiar sights starting my thoughts, swards and poplars, villas within tall iron railings, flower vases on either side of the high steps—*les perrons;* how evocative the word is of Paris, and Paris is in itself an evocation of France. France, from the northern strait to the Mediterranean, is animated by the antique spirit; the Pagan spirit is everywhere, France has never lost it, and a more beautiful day for seeing Paris can hardly be imagined. All the way to the Champs Elysées I shall walk, my mind alert as my step, discovering symbols everywhere, my real thought, however, set on one little hillside, a line of houses, eight or nine, close by the Arc de Triomphe, the most ordinary in the avenue. For she liked the ordinary, and I have often wondered what was the link of association? Was it no more than her blonde hair drawn up from the neck, her fragrant skin, or her perverse subtle senses? It was something more, it must have been, for I like to recall the rustle of a flowered dress she wore as she moved, drifting like a perfume, passing from her frivolous bedroom into a room without taste, stiff and middle-class, notwithstanding the crowns placed over the tall portraits. In one corner there hangs a picture of two children. Georgette is the fairer; in her pale eyes and thinly-curved lips there is a mixture of yearning and restlessness, and as the child was so the

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woman is. Georgette has lived to paper one entire wall of her bedroom with trophies won on the battlefields of ardently danced cotillons. The other child is of a stricter nature, and even in the picture her slightly darkened ringlets are less wanton than her sister's. Her eyes are more pensive, and no oracle was needed to predict children for one and cotillon favours for the other.

It was once customary to me to sit on her bedroom balcony reading, talking, or watching the sky growing pale beyond Mont Valérien, the shadow drifting and defining and shaping the hill. In hours like the present, dreaming in a studio, we remember those who deceived us, those who made us suffer, and in these hours faces, fragments of faces, rise out of a past, the line of a bent neck, the whiteness of a hand; and the eyes. I remember her eyes. One day in an orchard, in the lush and luxuriance of June, her husband walked in front with a friend. I pleaded. 'You can kiss me now,' she said, raising her pale eyes. But her husband was in front, a thick-set man, and there was a brook. I foresaw an unpleasant struggle: confess and be done with it!—I confess that I didn't dare to kiss her then, and I don't think she ever forgave me that lack of courage. It is, of course, very silly to spend the afternoon thinking of such rubbish! It would be silly if it were not of such rubbish that our lives are made. Grey hair has not begun to appear yet in the blonde, it will never turn grey, but she was shrivelling a little the last time I saw her last year, and at her age a year counts for double. But if I don't go to her this year I shall go next.

In imagination I go past her house, thinking of a man she used to talk about, 'the man she left her 'ome for'; that is how the London street girl would word it. One who had lately been the centre of a disgraceful scandal, a sordid but characteristic end for the Don Juan of the nineteenth century. Or it may be that she loved the big,

bearded man whose photograph she once showed me—the man who killed himself for not having enough money to live as he wished to live. That was her explanation. I think she had to pay some money to the dead man's relations for her letters. She liked dark, rough men who looked as if they could carry trunks, or she liked women. She once said to me, 'Girls make better lovers than men.' It was twenty years ago since she turned round on me in the gloom of her brougham unexpectedly, and it was as if some sensual spirit had come out of a world of perfume and lace. These sensual American women are like orchids, and who would hesitate between an orchid and a rose?

In imagination I have descended the Champs Elysées, and have crossed the Place de la Concorde, and the Seine is flowing past just as it flowed when the workmen were building Nôtre Dame. A thousand years ago and a thousand years hence men will stand as I am standing to-day, watching its current, thinking of little blonde women, and the shudder they can send through the flesh. The Reverend Donne has it that certain ghosts do not raise the hair, but the flesh; mine do more than that, for they set me thinking of yesterday and of to-morrow, and the great fact that the time comes when desire wilts and dies, and then I remember that the sexual interest never dies.

We take pleasure in thinking in middle life of those we enjoyed in youth, and she, of whom I am thinking, lives far away in the Latin Quarter, in an ill-paven street that used to throw my carriage from side to side! The *concierge* is the same, a little thicker, a little heavier; she always used to have a baby in her arms, now there are no more babies; her children, I suppose, have grown up and have gone away. At the foot of the stairs there was a darkness, and I used to run up those stairs in great haste

to the fourth floor; the bell still tinkles in memory's ears and her rooms are present in my imagination—formal rooms hers were, with richly-bound volumes on the tables that looked as if they had never been opened. Even the studio was formal. She only kept one servant, a little, red-headed girl, and seeing this girl back again after an absence of many years, I asked Lizzie for her story, and learnt that she had gone away to be married, and after ten unfortunate years had returned to her old mistress, to this demure, discreet and sly New Englander, who must have had many lovers, but I know nothing of her except her sensuality, for she had to let me into that secret.

She was a religious woman, a devout Protestant, and thinking of her my thoughts are carried across the sea, and I am in the National Gallery looking at Van Eyck's picture, studying the grave sensuality of the man's face—he speaks with uplifted hand like one in a pulpit, and the gesture and expression tell us as plainly as if we heard him that he is admonishing his wife (he is given to admonition), he is telling her that her condition—her new pregnancy—is an act of the Divine Will. She listens, but how curiously! with a sort of partial comprehension afloat upon her face, more of the guinea-pig than of the rabbit type. The twain are sharply differentiated, and one of the objects of the painter seems to have been to show us how far one human being may be removed from another. The husband is painfully clear to himself, the wife is happily unconscious of herself. Everything in the picture suggests order; the man's face tells a mind the same from day to day, from year to year, the same passions, the same prayers; his apparel, the wide-brimmed hat, the cloak falling in long straight folds, the peaked shoon, are an habitual part of him. We see little of the room, but every one remembers the chandelier hanging from the ceiling

reflected in the mirror opposite. These reflections have lasted for three hundred years, they are the same to-day as the day they were painted, and so is the man; he lives again, he is a type that Nature never wearies of reproducing, for I suppose he is essential to life, and this sober Flemish interior expresses my mistress's character almost as well as her own apartments. I always experienced a chill, a sense of formality, when the door was opened, and while I stood waiting for her in the prim drawing-room, in which there was not much light, for heavy curtains clung about the windows, and tapestries covered the walls. In the passage there were oak chests, and you can imagine, reader, this woman waiting for me by an oak table, a little ashamed of her thoughts, but unable to overcome them. Once I heard her playing the piano, and it struck me as an affectation. As I let my thoughts run back things forgotten emerge. Here comes one of her gowns! a dark-green, the very same olive-green as the man's cloak. She wore her hair short like a boy's, and though it ran all over her head in little curls, it did not detract at all from the New England type, the woman in whose speech Biblical phraseology still lingers. Lizzie was a miraculous survival of the Puritans who crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower* and settled in New England. Paris had not changed her. She was *le grave Puritan du tableau;* the reader will notice that I write *le grave Puritan,* for of his submissive, childlike wife there was nothing in Lizzie except her sex. As her instinct was in conflict with her ideals, her manner was studied; she never fell into confidence, so in a sense we remained always strangers. It is when lovers tell their illusions and lonelinesses that they know each other; the fiercest spasm tells us little, and it is forgotten, whereas a simple confidence is remembered years afterwards, and brings a lost love before us though she be underground, or a thousand miles away. Lizzie was not

Spent Love confidential: her soul she kept to herself, if she had one. All the same she was a true, real woman, and a clever woman, and that is why I pay her the homage of an annual visit.

Our conversation is often laboured, there are awkward and painful pauses, and during these pauses we sit looking at each other, thinking no doubt of the changes that time has wrought. One of her chief charms was her figure—one of the prettiest I have ever seen; she still retains a good deal of its grace; but she shows her age in her hands; they have thickened at the joints, and they were such slender hands. Last year she spoke of herself as an old woman, and the remark seemed to me disgraceful and useless, for no man cares to hear a woman whom he has loved call herself old; why draw attention to one's age when one does not look it? and last year she looked astonishingly young for fifty-five; that was her age, she said. She asked me my age; the question was unpleasant, and before I was aware of it I told a lie, and as it seemed to me that she knew I had lied to her, I took up my hat to go. But she asked me if I would care to see her husband; 'Of course, of course,' and we found the old man alone in his studio, looking at an engraving under the light of the lamp, much more like a picture than any of his paintings. She asked him if he remembered me, and he rose, muttering something, and to help him I mentioned that I had been one of his pupils. The dear old man said of course, and that he would like to show me his pictures, but Lizzie said—I suppose it was nervousness that made her say it, but it was a strangely tactless remark—'I don't think, dear, that Mr. —— cares for your pictures.' However celebrated a man may be, it is mortifying to hear that somebody, however humble the person may be, does not care for his art. I saved the situation, however. It is not always that one thinks of the right

words at the right moment, but it would be hard to improve on the admonition that she did me a wrong, that, like every one who liked art, I had changed my opinion many times, but after many wanderings had come back to the truth; and in order to deceive the old man I spoke of Ingres, saying that I had never failed in that love, adding, after a faint pause, 'And how could I love Ingres's pictures without loving yours, Sir?' The old man answered, forgetful of his own high position, 'We may both like Ingres, but it is not probable that we like the same Ingres.' I said I did not know any Ingres I did not admire, and asked him which he admired, and we had a pleasant conversation about the Apotheosis of Homer, and the pictures in the Musée de Montauban. Then the old man said, 'I must show Mr. —— my pictures. I must show him my Virgin,' and he explained that the face of the Infant Jesus was not yet finished. Spent Love

It was wonderful to see this old man, who must have been nearly eighty, taking the same interest in his pictures as he took fifty years ago. Some stupid reader will think, perchance, that it mattered forsooth that I had once loved his wife. But how could such a thing matter? Think for a moment, dear reader, for all readers are dear, even the stupidest, and you will see that you are still entangled in conventions and prejudices. Do you think, dear reader, that she and I should have dropped on our knees and confessed? No, you can't think anything so stupid, for had we done so, he would have thought us two rude people, with a taste for popular literature. It is pleasanter to think what will happen to her when he dies. Will she return to Boston? If not, shall I ever see her again? Last year I vowed that I would never return and I think it would please her as well if I stayed away. When I am not by her she is with me, but in the same room, amid the

Spent Love

familiar furniture, we are divided by the insuperable years and to retain her I must send her away. Now where did I read of a man who sent his mistress away so that his possession might be more complete? Or is the idea mine? It cannot be, for I am without a wish to write it, and far more attractive to me is a sort of Beau Brummel of the emotions going every year to Paris to spend a day with each of his mistresses.

There was Madame ——. The name is in itself beautiful, characteristically French, and it takes me back to the middle centuries, to the middle of France, for I always thought that that tall woman, who spoke so quickly and so sincerely, dealing out her soul rapidly as one might cards, must have come from the very heart of France; like Balzac, who came from Tours; by her side one was really in France; and, as her lover, one lived through every circumstance of a French love-story. My story fell on those years when she lived in what is called in Paris an hotel—a house that had its own *concierge;* and shameful though it was, I liked certainly to hear the man say, 'Oui, monsieur, Madame la Marquise est chez elle.' And it is flattering, no doubt, to wait for a *Marquise* in a boudoir stretched with blue silk under a Louis XVI. crystal chandelier, to hear her say, 'I'm afraid you're thinking a great deal of me,' leaning her hands as she spoke the words over the back of the chair, making it easy for me to take them and to murmur over them, 'Beautiful hands,' and for her to answer, 'Hands that have not done any kitchen work for at least five hundred years.'

The drawing-room opened on to a great conservatory that almost filled the garden, and the *Marquise* used to receive there, but I've forgotten who was her lover when the last fête was given and what play was acted, only that the ordinary guests lingered over the light

refreshments, scenting the supper, and that to get rid of them our orders were to bid the *Marquise* good-night ostentatiously and to creep round, gaining the bedrooms by the servants' staircase, and to hide ourselves. It was very exciting for a young man, and as soon as the uninvited guests could delay no longer and were gone, the supper-tables were laid for a repast and a revelry that was to last all night. Shall I ever forget the moment when the glass roof of the conservatory began to turn blue, or the shrilling of the awakening sparrows, or how haggard we all were when we bade our hostess good-morning? Not till eight o'clock did we leave her, and that fête was paid for with the remnant of the poor *Marquise's* fortune. Afterwards she was very poor, and Suzanne, her daughter, went on the stage and discovered a certain talent for acting which has been her fortune to this day, and to-night I will go to the Vaudeville to see her. But for my adventure there should be seven visits; Madame —— would make a fourth; I hear that she is losing her sight, and lives in a château built in the time of Louis XIII., with high-pitched roofs and many shutters, and formal gardens, with balustrades, fish-ponds, and *des charmilles*, and to walk in an avenue of clipped limes with a woman who is nearly blind, and talk to her of the past, would be indeed an adventure far 'beyond the range of formal man's emotion.' Madame —— interrupted our love-story. She would be another—that would be five—and I shall think of two more during dinner. But now I must be moving on; and hearing the last notes trickle out—somebody has been playing the prelude to *Tristan*—I say, 'Another day has gone by in meditation on art and women. To-morrow I shall again meditate on art and women, and will inquire for her at the stage door after the performance, and if she cannot see me she will make an

Spent Love

Spent Love

appointment, for she would like to talk about her mother and the old days in the Rue de Londres, and the day after I shall be occupied with what I once heard dear old M'Cormac, Bishop of Galway, describe in his sermon as "the degrading passion of 'loave.'"'

VIII

Ninon's Table D'hôte

THE DAY lies in sultry languor. A warm night breathes upon the town, and in the exhaustion of light and hush of sound life strikes sharply on the ear and brain.

It was early in the evening when I returned home, and, sitting in the window, I read till surprised by the dusk; and when my eyes could no longer follow the printed page, holding the book between finger and thumb, my face resting on the other hand, I looked out on the garden, allowing my heart to fill with dreams. The book that interested me dealt with the complex craft of the Low Countries—a book written by a painter. It has awakened in me memories of all kinds, heart-rending struggles, youthful passion, bitter disappointments; it has called into mind a multitude of thoughts and things, and wearied with admiring many pictures and arguing with myself, I am now glad to exchange my book for the gentle hallucinations of the twilight.

I see a line of leafage drawn across the Thames, but the line dips, revealing a slip of grey water with no gleam upon it. Warehouses and a factory chimney rise ghostly and grey, and so cold is that grey tint that it might be gotten with black and white; the warmth of umber is hardly needed. Behind the warehouses and the factory chimney the sky is murky and motionless, but higher up it is creamy white, and there is some

cloud movement. Four lamps, two on either side of the factory chimney, look across the river; one constantly goes out—always the same lamp—and a moment after it springs into its place again. Across my window a beautiful branch waves like a feather fan, the only part of the picture worked out in detail, and I watch its soft and almost imperceptible swaying, tempted to count the leaves. Below it, and a little beyond it, between it and the river, night gathers in the gardens; and there, amid serious greens, passes the black stain of a man's coat, and, in a line with the coat, in the beautifully swaying branch, a belated sparrow hops from twig to twig, awakening his mates in his search for an easy perch. In the sharp towers of Temple Gardens the pigeons have gone to sleep in the cotes under the conical caps of slate.

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The gross, jaded, uncouth present has slipped from me as a garment might, and I see the past like a little show, struggles and heartbreakings of old time, and watch it with the same indifferent curiosity as I would the regulated mimicry of a stage-play. Pictures from the past come and go without an effort of will; many are habitual memories, but the Comtesse Ninon de Calvador rises to the surface of my mind, out of the depths where she lay submerged for fifteen years—a large brunette, whose unstayed bosom filled a blue *peignoir* as she bent over a dark, broad-shouldered young man at work on a picture of advanced impressionism in her boudoir on the day when, instructed by Augusta Holmés, I went to call on her with a great posy, it being her birthday. Her young man moved into a corner so that I might better admire his picture of a railway station painted in pink and yellow dots. He was a little too plainly her lover, and it was no surprise to me to hear during the course of the evening that he was looked

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at askance, for even in Montmartre it was regarded as a dishonour to allow the lady with whom you lived to pay for your dinner. Villiers de L'Isle Adam, who had once been Ninon's lover, answered the reproaches levelled against him for having accepted too largely of her hospitality with 'Que de bruit pour quelques côtelettes!' and his transgressions were forgiven him for the sake of the quip which seemed to summarise the moral endeavour and difficulties of the entire quarter.

In Villiers' day Ninon was a young woman; but in my day she was interested in the young generation, keeping friends, however, with all her old lovers, never denying them her board, though they had lost all thought of her bed.

The impressionist's indignation against Villiers was amusing to hear, and his charge that Villiers had squandered a great part of Ninon's fortune was met by a once famous quip: 'The young man talks like the *concierge* in my story of "Les demoiselles de Bienfillatre."' Poor Villiers was not much to blame; for it was part of Ninon's temperament to waste her money on literature and art, and the canvases round the room testified that she spent a great deal on modern painting. Ninon certainly had once been a rich woman; rumour credited her with spending fifty thousand francs a year, and in her case rumour said no more than the truth, for it would require at least that to live as she lived, keeping open house to all the literature, music, painting, and sculpture done in the Quarter. At first sight her hospitality seems unreasonable, but when we ponder we see that it conforms to the rules of all hospitality. There must be a principle of selection, and the question comes, were the *ratés* she entertained less amusing than the people we meet in Grosvenor Square or the Champs Elysées? For a friend to introduce his friend is common

practice in all society, but at Ninon's there was a restriction which I never met elsewhere: no friend could bring another unless the newcomer was a *raté*—in other words, unless he had written music or verse, or painted or carved, in a style so eccentric that it did not appeal to the taste of the ordinary public; inability to reach the taste of the general public was the criterion that prevailed in the Rue le Moine. Ninon's Table D'hôte

The windows of Ninon's boudoir opened upon the garden, and on my expressing surprise at its size and its large trees, she gave me permission to investigate; and I walked about the pond, interested in numerous ducks and cats, and in companies of macaws and cockatoos that climbed down from their perches, till I came upon a badger and her brood, but at my approach they disappeared into an enormous excavation. Behind the summer-house I came upon a bear asleep, and not far off some chained apes strove hard to gain my attention, which I yielded to them till I heard Augusta Holmés singing her opera; singing all the different parts—soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass.

At that time we were all talking about her, and I was standing by the window listening, when Ninon's cat suddenly misconducted herself. I raised the window, but the ventilation did not prove enough, and a company of women came forth in flowered gowns, and scarves about their shoulders. With them was a poet who compared the darkening sky to a blue veil with a gold beetle upon it. One of the women brought a guitar with her, and again Augusta's voice streamed up through the stillness, till, compelled by the beauty of the singing, we drew nearer; and as the composer sang her songs, attitudes grew more abandoned, hands fell pensively, and among the half-seen faces I caught sight of a woman of exceeding fairness who Ninon remembered was a cousin of hers, one whom she

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had not seen for many years, but how Clare had discovered her in the Rue le Moine she could not tell me. Somebody whispered that she was the wife of a rich silk merchant at Tours, which added to the mystery, and later in the evening the lady took me into her confidence, confessing that she had never been in artistic society before, and begged me to be kind enough to point out the celebrities present to her, and to tell her why they were celebrated.

'Who is he who slouches towards the pond, that one wearing grey trousers and a black jacket?—oh!'

My companion's exclamation was caused by a new sight of Verlaine; he walked his hat in his hand (the evening being warm), and the great bald skull, hanging like a cliff over eyebrows shaggy as furze-bushes, frightened her. We continued to watch him. 'How bored he seems; and why does he walk apart like that, speaking to nobody? Does he look upon us as too stupid?' my companion asked, and almost at the same moment Verlaine caught sight of me, and coming forward he engaged us in conversation, remarking, as one might say, 'it is a fine evening': 'If I were in love with a young girl or with a young man——' A look of alarm spread over my companion's face, and drawing me aside she whispered, 'You must not leave me alone with him.' Her manner was so abrupt that I was afraid Verlaine would take offence, but the spell of boredom was upon him, and so acutely that to lift it he set himself to frighten my companion (whom he recognised, no doubt, as a provincial) still further, succeeding very well by the elation of an adventure that had befallen him at Crotoy. 'Il se trouva,' said he, 'que j'attendais une correspondance de trains au Crotoy, une ville de pêcheur; et ayant une demi-heure à perdre je me suis dirigé vers la ville. En revenant, sur le pont, j'ai rencontré le chef de gare, un

bel homme, une barbe noire, jusque là. Eh bien, il en était . . . c'était épatant.' As soon as he was out of hearing my companion inquired eagerly who that horrible man was. 'Is he a priest? I mean was he ever a priest?' 'No, but he believes in priests, which is worse. He is the poet Verlaine, the singer of the sweetest verses in the French language. His is a sort of chattering song like a robin's. The robin confesses his little soul from a twig; his song is but a tracery of his soul, and with the same simplicity Verlaine traces his, without troubling to inquire if what he traces is good or ill. A lecher, a crapulous and bestial fellow at times, at other times a poet, a visionary, the only poet that Catholicism has produced since Dante. And the small thin man over yonder, with hair growing thickly low down on his forehead, is Huysmans, the apologist of that fifteenth-century monster, Gilles de Rais, the prototype, so it is said, of the nursery tale of Blue-beard. Huysmans speaks of the white soul of the Middle Ages, and in about two years hence all the young men in England will be speaking of the white soul of the Middle Ages, without the least idea what it means, which is not surprising, for it means nothing whatever. Verlaine has spoken of himself as a mediæval Catholic, but as he has not cut the throats of many little boys, it may be doubted if his soul be as white as Gilles's. He does not stop to argue, like his mediæval ancestor, about God's grandfather (St. Anne's husband); he abandons himself to the Church as a child to a fairy tale; the mediæval sculptors have represented her attired very prettily in cloaks with long folds, they have put graceful crowns upon her head, and Verlaine likes these things; they inspire him to write, he feels that belief in the Church is part of himself, and his poetical genius is to tell his own story; he is one of the great soul-tellers. From a literary point of view there is a good deal to be said in favour of faith when it is not

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joined with practice; acceptation of dogma shields one from controversy; Verlaine's allegiance allows him to concentrate himself entirely upon things; it weans him away from ideas—the curse of modern literature—and makes him a sort of divine vagrant living his life in the tavern and in the hospital. It is only those who have freed themselves from all prejudice that get close to life, who get the real taste of life—the aroma as from a wine that has been many years in bottle. Sometimes he thinks he might have written a little more poetry, and he sighs, but he quickly recovers. "After all, I have written a good many volumes, and what would art be without life, without love?" And from such a soul we get verse always winsome, delicate, slender as the birch-tree, elegiac like it; a lake poet, a suburban lake not far from a casino. What makes me speak about the lake is that I once thought these verses:—

> Ton âme est un lac d'amour
> Dont mes pensers sont les cygnes.
> Vois comme ils font le tour . . .

were Verlaine's. The first two lines are well enough, but the third betrays a common, and of all an unmelodious mind: everybody might have written them; but Verlaine's verses are always his own; even when they are without poetry they are within the versification that haunts in an ear that hears a song in French verse that no French poet ever heard before, a song ranging from the ecstasy of the nightingale to the robin's little homily.

> Oui, c'était par un soir joyeux de cabaret,
> Un de ces soirs plutôt trop chauds où l'on dirait
> Que le gaz du plafond conspire à notre perte
> Avec le vin du zinc, saveur naïve et verte.
> On s'amusait beaucoup dans la boutique et on
> Entendait des soupirs voisins d'accordéon

Que ponctuaient des pieds frappant presque en cadence. Ninon's
Quand la porte s'ouvrit de la salle de danse Table
Vomissant tout un flot dont toi, vers où j'étais, D'hôte
Et de ta voix qui fait que soudain je me tais,
S'il te plaît de me donner un ordre péremptoire.
Tu t'écrias "Dieu, qu'il fait chaud! Patron, à boire!"

'She was from Picardy; and he tells of her horrible accent, and in elegy number five he continues the confession, telling how his well-beloved used to get drunk.

Tu fis le saut de. . . . Seine et, depuis morte-vive,
Tu gardes le vertige et le goût du néant.'

'But how can a man confess such things?' my companion asked me, and we stood looking at each other in the midst of the gardens until an ape, cattling prettily, ran towards me and jumped into my arms, and looking at the curious little wizened face, the long arms covered with hair, I said:—

'Verlaine has an extraordinary power of expression, and to be ashamed of nothing but to be ashamed, is his genius, just as it was Manet's. It is to his shamelessness that we owe his most beautiful poems, all written in garrets, in taverns, in hospitals—yes, and in prison.'

'In prison! But he didn't steal, did he?' and the merchant's wife looked at me with a frightened air, and I think her hand went towards her pocket.

'No, no; a mere love-story, a dispute with Rambaud in some haunt of vice, a knife flashed, Rambaud was stabbed, and Verlaine spent three years in prison. As for Rambaud, it was said that he repented and renounced love, entered a monastery, and digged the soil somewhere on the shores of the Red Sea for the grace of God. But these hopes proved illusory; only Verlaine knows where he is, and he will not tell. The last certain news we had of him was that he had joined a caravan, and was wandering

Table D'hote

Ninon's somewhere into the desert, but Verlaine, preferring civilised savagery, remains in Paris,—living in thieves' quarters, getting drunk, writing beautiful poems in the hospitals, coming out of hospitals and falling in love with drabs.

Dans ces femmes d'ailleurs je n'ai pas trouvé l'ange
Qu'il eut fallu pour remplacer ce diable, toi!
L'une, fille du Nord, native du Crotoy,
Etait rousse, mal grasse et de prestance molle;
Elle ne m'adressa guère qu'une parole
Et c'était d'un petit cadeau qu'il s'agissait.
L'autre, pruneau d'Agen, sans cesse croassait,
En revanche, dans son accent d'ail et de poivre,
Une troisième, récemment chanteuse au Havre,
Affectait le dandinement des matelots
Et m' . . . enguelait comme un gabier tançant les flots,
Mais portrait beau vraiment, sacrédié, quel dommage.
La quatrième était sage comme une image,
Châtain clair, peu de gorge et priait Dieu parfois:
Le diantre soit de ses sacrés signes de croix!
Les seize autres, autant du moins que ma mémoire
Surnage en ce vortex, contaient toutes l'histoire
Connue, un amant chic, puis des vieux, puis "l'îlot"
Tantot bien, tantôt moins, le clair café falot
Les terrasses l'été, l'hiver les brasseries
Et par degrés l'humble trottoir en théories
En attendant les bons messieurs compatissants
Capables d'un louis et pas trop repoussants
Quorum ego parva pars erim, me disais-je.
Mais toutes, comme la première du cortége,
Dès avant la bougie éteinte et le rideau
Tiré n'oubliaient pas le "mon petit cadeau."

'In the verses I have just quoted, you remember, he says that the fourth was chaste as an image, her hair was pale brown, she had scarcely any bosom, and

prayed to God sometimes. He always hated piety when it interfered with his pleasure, and in the next verse he says, "The devil take those sacred signs of the Cross." ' Ninon's Table D'hôte

'But do you know any of these women?'

'Oh yes; we all know the terrible Sara, who beats him occasionally.'

The merchant's wife asked if she were here.

'No, Ninon will not receive her. In spite of Ninon's orders he brought her once, but she was so drunk that she could not get beyond the threshold, and Ninon's lover, the man you saw painting the steam-engines, was charged to explain to the poet that Sara's intemperance made her conspicuous in general society. "I know Sara has her faults," he murmured in reply to argument. "I know she has her faults," he repeated, "and so have others. We all have our faults, and as you will not have Sara, my place will be vacant in the future." Hunger has brought him back at last.'

'And who is that hollow-chested man? How pathetic he looks with his goat-like beard.'

'That is the celebrated Cabaner. He will tell you, if you speak to him, that his father was a man like Napoleon, only more so. He is the author of many aphorisms: "that three military bands would be necessary to give the impression of silence in music." He is one of the features of the Nouvelle Athènes; he is there every night, and will tell you that his ballad of "The Salt Herring" is written in a way that perhaps Wagner would not understand, but which Liszt would.'

'Is his music ever played? Does it sell? How does he live? Not by his music, I suppose?'

'Yes, by his music, by playing waltzes and polkas in the Avenue de la Motte Piquet. His earnings are five francs a day, and for thirty-five francs a month he has a room where the disinherited heirs of art—the frequenters

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of these gardens—sleep. His room is furnished—ah, you should see it! If Cabaner wants a chest of drawers he buys a fountain, and he broke off the head of the Vénus de Milo, saying that he could henceforth admire her without being troubled by any recollections of the people he meets in the streets. I could talk to you for hours about his unselfishness, his love of art, his strange music, and his stranger poems, for his music accompanies his own verses.'

'Is he too clever for the public, or not clever enough?'

'You're asking me the question we've been asking ourselves for the last ten years. . . . The man fumbling at his shirt-collar over yonder is the celebrated Villiers de L'Isle Adam.'

And I remember how it pleased me to tell this simple-minded woman all I knew about Villiers.

'He has no talent whatever, only genius, and that is why he is a *raté*,' I said.

But the woman was not so simple as I imagined, and one or two questions she put to me led me to tell her that Villiers' genius only appeared in streaks like gold in quartz.

'The comparison is an old one, but there is no better one to explain Villiers, for when he is not inspired his writing is very like quartz.'

'His great name——'

'His name is part of his genius. He chose it, and it has influenced his writings. Have I not heard him say, "Car je porte en moi les richesses stériles d'un grand nombre de rois oubliés"?'

'But is he a legitimate descendant?'

'Legitimate in the sense that he desired the name more than any of those who ever bore it legitimately.'

At that moment Villiers passed by me, and I introduced him to her, and very soon he began to tell us that his

Eve had just been published, and the success of it was great. Ninon's Table D'hôte

'On m'a dit hier de passer à la caisse. L'édition est épuisée, vous voyez—il paraît, la fortune est venue . . . même à moi.'

But Villiers was often tiresomely talkative about trifles, and as soon as I got the chance I asked him if he were going to tell us one of his stories, reminding him of one I had heard he had been telling lately in the *brasseries* about a man in quest of a quiet village where he could get rest. Had he written it? No, he had not written it yet, but now that he knew I liked it he would rise earlier to-morrow. Some one took him away from us, and I had to tell my companion the story.

'Better,' I said, 'he should never write it, for half of it exists in his voice and in his gestures, and every year he gets less and less of himself onto the paper. One has to hear him tell his stories in the café—and none did he tell better than the story he was about to tell us when that stupid fellow broke in upon us—how a man, recovering from a long illness, is advised by his doctor to seek rest in the country, and how, seeing the name of a village on the map that touches his imagination, he takes the train, feeling certain that he will find an Arcadian simplicity. But the village he catches sight of from the carriage window is morose and lonely, and worse than the arid plain are the human beings he sees at the station; they peer into his face and handle his luggage so suspiciously that he begins to think them robbers and assassins in disguise. He would escape, but he dare not, for on his way to the village he perceives that he is being followed, and to test his suspicions he asks the villagers if they can direct him to a lodging. His request leaves no doubt in their minds that he is an anarchist, and that his trunks are full of material for the manufacture of bombs. So

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they dog his steps to the farmhouse whither they have directed him, to tell their fears to the farmer and his wife. Villiers can improvise the consultations in the café at midnight, but when morning comes he cannot write, his brain is empty. You must come some night to the Nouvelle Athènes to hear him tell how sure the hinds are that the house is going to be blown up, and how they sit in consultation, their fears increasing as the night advances, till the silence above them bodes no good, and they begin to ascend the stairs, their footsteps filling the heart of the wretched convalescent with terror. As he sits up in bed listening to the ascending sounds great drops of sweat collect on his forehead. Villiers can suggest the sound of feet on the creaking stairs, and the terror of the man piling furniture against the door, and the terror of those outside who, when they break into the room, find a dead man. You must come to the Nouvelle Athènes to hear Villiers tell his story. I'll meet you there to-morrow night. . . . Will you dine with me?'

The merchant's wife hesitated. She promised to come, and she came; but she did not prove an interesting mistress; why, I cannot remember, and I am glad to put her out of my mind, for I want to think of the blonde poet whom we heard reciting verses, under the aspen, in which one of the apes had taken refuge, whose fair hair I can see floating about his shoulders, his thin nose, his pale eyes, one always a little bloodshot. Didn't somebody once describe him as a sort of sensual Christ? He, too, was after the merchant's wife; and to win her he selected her as the subject of his licentious verses—reassure yourself, reader, licentious merely from the point of view of prosody.

Ta nuque est de santal sur les vifs frissons d'or,
Mais c'est une autre que j'adore.

The merchant's wife, forgetful of me, charmed by the poet, by the excitement of hearing herself made the subject of a poem, drew nearer. Strange, is it not, that I should remember a few words here and there? Ninon's Table D'hôte

Il m'aime, un peu, beaucoup. Selon l'antique rit
Elle effeuille la Marguerite.

The women still sit, circlewise, as if enchanted, the night inspires him, and he improvises trifle after trifle. Ah, could I remember the serenade to the moon.

Lune blême et sans auréole,
Avec les langueurs d'une créole.
Vous revez . . .

But I can only remember Cabaner's salt herring.

He came along holding in his hands dirty, dirty, dirty,
A big nail pointed, pointed, pointed,
And a hammer heavy, heavy, heavy.
He propped the ladder high, high, high
Against the wall white, white, white.
And went up the ladder high, high, high,
To place the nail pointed, pointed, pointed,
Against the wall—toc! toc! toc!
He tied to the nail a string long, long, long,
And at the end of it a salt herring dry, dry, dry.
Then letting fall the hammer heavy, heavy, heavy,
He descended the ladder high, high, high,
Picked up the hammer and went away, away, away.
Since then at the end of the string long, long, long,
A salt herring dry, dry, dry,
Has swung slowly, slowly, slowly.
Now I have composed this story simple, simple, simple,
To infuriate serious people, people, people,
And to make little children laugh, laugh, laugh.

Ninon's Table D'hôte

This was the libretto on which Cabaner wrote music 'that Wagner would not understand, but which Liszt would.' Dear, dear Cabaner, how well I can see thy goat-like beard, and the ape who broke his chain earlier in the evening. We could not persuade him to leave the tree, and the brute seemed somehow determined that we should not hear. Mendis chattered till midnight, and the cocks began answering each other, all the way down and along and across the violet suburb. So loud was their shrilling that I awoke, surprised to find myself sitting at my window in King's Bench Walk. A moment ago I was in Madame Ninon de Calvador's garden, and every whit as much as I am now in King's Bench Walk.

As I sit looking into the darkness, I remember Villiers, arriving when dinner was half over; fumbling at his shirt-collar, and apologising for being late, he assured us he had dined and that his friend whom he introduced to us as a man of genius had dined too; and being short of plates that evening, one was snatched away from a cat and given to Villiers' friend instead of to Villiers, who would not have minded, but Villiers' friend did, and to emphasise his disgust he struck the table with his fist, and received the explanations offered to him with wrath, saying, 'Eh bien, je casse tout.' He wrote an article in the *Gil Blas* entitled 'Ninon's *Table D'hôte*,' from which piece of literature she learned that the world viewed her hospitality as folly, and that her efforts to benefit the arts and the artists only provoked mirth. Somebody told me this story: who I cannot tell, for it is all long, long ago. But it seems to me that I remember hearing that it was this article that killed her.

My thoughts return to Ninon's garden, explicit in my memory in every detail—a tree taking shape upon the dawning sky, the hairy ugliness of the ape in its branches, and along the grey grass a waddling squad of the ducks

betaking themselves to the pond, a poet talking to a merchant's wife, Madame de Calvador leaning on a lover's arm, and had I a palette I could make a picture out of that dusky suburb. Had I a pen I could write verses about these people of old time, but it is better to sit by my window enjoying what remains of the mood and the memory. The mood has nearly passed, the desire for action is approaching. I would give much for another memory like the one going by, but memory may not be beckoned, and my mind is dark now, dark as that garden. The swaying, fan-like bough by my window is nearly one mass of green; the last sparrow has fallen asleep, and I hear nothing but a horse trotting in the Strand.

Ninon's Table D'hôte

IX

I HAD come a thousand miles—rather more, nearly fifteen hundred—in the hope of picking up the thread of a love-story that had fallen into tangles and knots and been broken off abruptly. A strange misadventure; for Doris had given a great deal of herself while denying me much, so much that at last, in despair, I fled from a one-sided love-affair; too one-sided to be borne any longer, at least by me. But it was difficult to fly from her pretty, inveigling face, delightful and winsome as the faces one finds on the panels of the early German masters, panels painted in pale tints, the cheeks touched with carmine in the midst of rose bowers. Who was that master who painted cunning virgins in rose bowers? The master of Cologne, I think. But no matter, for Doris's hair was darker than the hair of those virgins, a rich gold hair, a mane of hair growing luxuriously, the golden note continued in the eyebrows, in the pupils of the eyes, in the freckles along her little nose, so firmly and

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beautifully modelled about the nostrils. Nor was there ever a more lovely or affectionate mouth, weak and beautiful as a flower, and the long curving hands were delightful to hold. There is her portrait, dear reader, prettily and truthfully painted by me, the portrait of a girl I left one afternoon in London, more than seventeen years ago, that I lost sight of, I thought, for ever, alas! But she had lived on in regret, the subject of many meditations: Was she married? and if so, was she happy? Why did she not write to me? and why, of all, did I not write to her? But if our love-story had run smooth there would be no regret, and without regret life would be all on the flat. Regret is like a mountain-top from which we survey our dead life, a mountain-top on which we pause and ponder, and very often, looking into the twilight, we ask ourselves whether it would be well to send a letter or some token. She and I had agreed that a few bars of Schumann's melody, "The Walnut-Tree," should be sent in case of an estrangement, and the one who received it should at once hurry to the side of the other and all difference be healed. But this token was never sent by me, perhaps because I did not know how to scribble the musical phrase; and pride perhaps kept her from sending it; in any case five years are a long while, and she seemed to have died out of my life altogether; but one day the sight of a woman who had known her brought her before my eyes, and I asked if Doris were married. The woman could not tell me; she had not seen her for many years; they, too, were estranged, and I went home saying to myself, 'Doris must be married. Is she happy married? Has she a baby? O shameful thought!' Dost remember, reader, how Balzac, when he came to the last page of *Massimilla Doni*, declared that he dared not pursue the story to the end. One word, he says, will suffice for the worshippers of the ideal: 'Massimilla Doni was

expecting.' And then, in a passage that is pleasanter to think about than to read—for whenever he speaks about art Balzac is something of a sciolist—we learn that the ideas of many great artists, painters and sculptors escaped from their niches and their frames and gathered weeping round Massimilla's bed. My portrait of Doris should convince thee, reader, that it would be as disgraceful for Doris to be "expecting" as it was for Massimilla Doni. I like to think of all the peris, the nymphs, the sylphs, the fairies of ancient legend, all her kinsfolk gathering about her bed, deploring her condition, regarding her as lost to them. Were such a thing to happen I should be kneeling in spirit certainly with them; and feeling, just as Balzac did about Massimilla Doni, that it was indeed a sacrilege that Doris should be "expecting," or even married. I wrote, omitting, however, to tell her why I had suddenly resolved to break silence, sending only a little note, a few words, that I was sorry not to have heard of her for so long a time, a little commonplace note, relieved perhaps by a touch of wistfulness, of regret. And this note was sent by a messenger duly instructed to ask for an answer. The answer was that the lady was away, but the letter would be forwarded to her. 'She is not married,' I thought; 'were she married her name would be sent to me. Perhaps not.' Other thoughts came into my mind, and I did not think of her again for the next two days, not till a long telegram was put into my hand. Doris! It had come from her, and it had come more than a thousand miles, 'regardless of expense,' I said; 'this telegram must have cost her ten or twelve shillings at the least.' She was delighted to hear from me; she had been ill, but was better now, and the telegram concluded with the usual 'Am writing.' The letter that arrived two days afterwards was like herself, full of impulse and affection; but it contained one phrase

which put black misgiving into my heart. In her description of her illness and her health, which was returning, and how she had come to be staying in this far-away Southern town, she alluded to its dulness, saying that if I came there virtue must be its own reward. 'Stupid of her to speak to me of virtue,' I muttered, 'for she must know well enough that it was her partial virtue that had separated us and caused the long estrangement.' So I sat pondering, trying to discover if she applied the phrase to herself or to the place where she was staying. How could it apply to the place? All places would be a paradise if——

And at the close of a long December evening I wrote a letter, the answer to which would decide whether I should undertake the long journey. 'The journey back will be detestable,' I muttered, and taking up the pen again I wrote, 'Your letter contains a phrase which fills me with dismay: you say, "Virtue must be its own reward," and this would seem that you are determined to be more aggressively Platonic than ever. Doris, this is ill news indeed; you would not have me consider it good news, would you?'

Other letters followed, but I doubt if I knew more of Doris's intentions when I stepped into the train than I did when I sat pondering by my fireside, trying to discover her meaning when she wrote that vile phrase, 'Virtue must be its own reward.' But somehow I seemed to have come to a decision, and that was the main thing. We act obeying a law deep down in our being, and remembering my Spinoza I said on the way to the station: 'If the stone rolling down the hill were to become conscious, it would think it was rolling itself,' and immediately after fell to thinking that Doris's pretty face might be pretty no longer. Yet she could not have changed much. She had said in her letter that in ten

minutes we should be talking just as in old time. Even so, none but madmen travel a thousand miles in search of a pretty face. And the madman that is in us all was propelling me, or it was the primitive man who crouches in some jungle of our being. Of one thing I was sure, that I was no longer a conventional citizen of the nineteenth century; I seemed to have met myself somewhere, in some book or poem or opera, and on stepping on board the Dover packet I began to identify myself with the heroes of ancient legend—Menelaus or Jason—which? The colour of Helen's hair isn't mentioned in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but Jason's quest was a golden fleece; so was mine, and delighted to find my life at last incorporate in the great tradition, I began to look forward to the journey, almost without dismay, though nothing wearies me so much as a long journey in the train.

Twenty-five years before I started with the intention of long travel, but the train journey from Calais to Paris wearied me so much that I rested in Paris for eight years, to return home to settle some financial embarrassments, and during those eight years I often thought of Italy, but a journey of sixteen or seventeen or eighteen hours always seemed so much like what purgatory must be, that Italy never tempted me enough to undertake it. A companion would be of no use; for who can talk for fifteen or sixteen hours? and while debating whether the journey to Plessy should be undertaken, my will rose and sank like the tide. But everything, pleasure and pain alike, is greater in imagination than in reality—there is always a reaction, and having anticipated more than mortal weariness in the train, the first hours did not seem to lag. Indeed, it seemed that I had been in the train only a little while when it stopped, yet Laroche is more than an hour from Paris, quite a countryside station, and it seems strange, too, that *le Côte d'Azur* should stop there. That

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was the grand name of the train that I was travelling by. Think of any English company running a train and calling it "The Azure Shore"! Think of going to Euston or to Charing Cross, saying you are going by "The Azure Shore"! So long as the name of this train endures, it is impossible to doubt that the French mind is more picturesque than the English, and nobody need wonder why the French school of painting, etc.

A fruit-seller cried his wares along the platform, and as breakfast was being prepared on board the train I bethought myself that a basket of French grapes would pass the time, for the grapes that grow in the open air are not like the leathery hot-house grapes filled with lumps of glue that we eat in England. On quests like mine one has to resort to many various little expedients. The grapes were decaying; only the bunch on the top was eatable; and it was not worth eating, and I began to think that the railway company's attention should be directed to the fraud. 'The directors of the railway think that the passenger should examine the quality of the grapes offered to him before purchasing,' would be the company's answer to my letter: a letter to the papers was out of the question, for French papers are not like ours—they do not print all the letters that are sent to them, and I meditated that the French public has no means of ventilating its grievances; a misfortune, no doubt, but not such a misfortune as it seems, when one reflects on how little good a letter addressed to the public press does in the way of remedying abuses in England.

I don't think we stopped again till we reached Lyons, and all the way there I sat at the window looking at the landscape—the long, long plain that the French peasant cultivates unceasingly, remembering that all the money that was lost in Panama came out of that plain, and

all the money invested in Russian bonds—five milliards. We passed through Champagne, or a corner of it, mayhap whither Zola went to study the French peasant before he wrote *La Terre*. The master's name carried me back to an evening when Huysmans, with that benevolent malice so characteristic of him, said that the stint of Zola's investigation was going out for a drive in a carriage with Madame Zola.

The primitive man that had risen out of some jungle of my being did not view this immense and highly cultivated plain with kindly eyes. It seemed to him to differ little from the town, so utterly was Nature dominated by man and portioned out. On a subject like this one can meditate for a long time, and I continued to meditate till roused by the stopping of the train. We were at Lyons at last, and the tall white-painted houses reminded me of Paris—Lyons, as seen from the windows of *le Côte d'Azur* at the end of a grey December day might be Paris. The same sky, sloppy and greasy; and the train happening to stop at a height from which I could look down a side street, I decided, after inspection, that Lyons was more provincial than Paris, and I fell to thinking of the great silk trade and the dull minds of the merchants, of their dinner-parties, their wives and mistresses. I noticed everything, but there was so little to notice that I wrote out a telegram and ran with it to the office, for Doris did not know what train I was coming by, and it would be pleasant to meet her lovely face among a crowd of strangers. My foot was on the footboard when the guard blew his whistle, and lying back in my seat I bethought myself of the catastrophe that had nearly overtaken me. But I had escaped it somehow, and resettling myself in my seat I said, 'Now let us study the landscape, for such an excellent opportunity may never occur again.'

The long plain, cultivated with tedious regularity, that we had been passing through before we came to Lyons, flowed on field after field; it seemed as if we should never reach the end of it, and looking on those same fields, for they were the same, I said to myself, 'If I were an economist that plain would interest me, but since I got Doris's letter I am primitive man, and he abhors the brown and the waving field, and "the spirit in his feet" leads him to some grassy glen where he follows his flocks, listening, perchance, to the song of the wilding bee in the gorse. That plain must breed a soulless race; peasants going forth at dusk to plough, and turning home at dusk to eat, procreate and sleep.' At last a river appeared, flowing amid sparse and stunted trees and reeds, a great wide sluggish river with low banks, flowing so slowly that it hardly seemed to flow at all. A few rooks flopped past, but rooks are hardly wilding birds; we saw one crow, and I thought of a heron rising slowly out of one of the reedy islands; and I liked to think of a poacher picking up a rabbit here and there; hares must have almost disappeared, even the flock and the shepherd are seldom seen in the corn-growing land. France is not as picturesque a country as England; Normandy alone seems to have pasturage, and the shepherd survives only along the banks of the Seine. Picardy, though a swamp, never conveys an idea of the wild; and the middle of France, which I looked at for the first time, shocked me, for primitive man, as I have said, was uppermost in me, and I turned away from the long plain, 'dreary,' I said, 'uneventful as a boarding-house.'

But it is a long plain that has no hill in it, and when I looked out again the whole range of the Esterelles came into view, with a jagged end projecting over the valley, showing against what remained of the sunset, one or two bars of dusky red, disappearing rapidly amid heavy clouds

massing themselves as if for a storm, and soon after night closed over the landscape. 'Henceforth,' I said, 'I shall have to look to my own thoughts for amusement,' and in my circumstances there was nothing reasonable for me to think of but Doris, especially of the moment when I should catch sight of her on the platform. So I fell to thinking of her, and must have been dreaming, for the voice of the guard, crying out, 'Dinner is served,' awoke me with a start.

It is said to be the habit of my countrymen never to drop into conversation with strangers in the train, but I doubt if that be so. Everything depends on the tact of him who first breaks silence; if his manner inspires confidence in his fellow-traveller he will receive such answers as will carry the conversation on for a minute or two, and in that time both will have come to a conclusion whether the conversation should be continued or ended. A pleasant little book might be written about train acquaintances, but I am writing the quest of a golden fleece, and may not allow myself further deflection in the narrative. All the same I must tell of the two whom I met at dinner on board *le Côte d'Azur*, a man and his wife, the woman a typical Frenchwoman, pleasant and agreeable, of the upper middle classes, whose conventions and prejudices were so plainly written into her face, her hands, voice, dress and mien, that a glance was enough. Her husband's accent told me he was French; but when he took off his hat it was plain that he had come from the tropics—Algeria, I thought, and was not surprised to hear that he had lived in the desert since he was fourteen. 'Almost a Saharian,' I said, and during dinner, and long after dinner, we were talking of the difference between the Oriental races and the European. He spoke the Tunisian *patois* and wrote the language of the Koran, which is understood all over the Sahara and the Soudan,

as well as in Mecca. What interested me, perhaps even more than the language question, was the story of the enlargement of his estate by the discovery of two Roman wells; 'for in ancient times,' he said, 'there were not three oases, but one. The wells to which these owed their existence were destroyed by the Numidians to save themselves from the Saracens, who were following them;' and I learnt from him that all the desert lying between the three could be brought into cultivation if the government decided to spend the necessary money. All the ancient wells could be rediscovered, he was convinced. As soon as I was weary of Plessy, he begged of me to take the boat from Marseilles, and spend some time with him in the wild.

'Visitors,' he said, 'are rare. You'll be welcome, and the railway will take you within a hundred miles of my house; the last hundred miles will be accomplished on the back of a dromedary, and I shall send you a fleet one and an escort.' 'Splendid,' I answered. 'I see myself arriving sitting high up on the hump gathering dates—I suppose there are date-palms where you are? Yes?—and wearing a turban and a bournous.' 'Would you like to see my bournous?' he said, and opening his valise he showed me one that filled me with admiration, and I remembered how, when I was a little child, I insisted on wearing a turban and going out for a ride on a pony, flourishing a Damascus blade which my father had brought home from the East. I have always thought this fantasy part of my character. It must be so, for it awoke in me twenty years afterwards; and it was with difficulty that I restrained myself from asking my travelling companion if I might wear his bournous in the train. All this is twelve years ago, and I have not yet gone to visit him in his oasis, but how many times have I done so in my imagination, seeing myself arriving on the back of a dromedary, crying out, 'Allah! Allah! And Mahommad is his prophet!'

But though one can go on thinking year after year about a bournous, one cannot talk for more than two or three hours about one; and though I looked forward to spending at least a fortnight with my friends, and making excursions in the desert, finding summer, as Fromentin says, *chez lui*, I was glad to say good-bye to him and his wife at Marseilles. I was still far from the end of my journey, and so weary of talk that at first it was doubtful whether it would be worth while to engage again in conversation, but a pleasant gentleman came into my carriage, and he required but little encouragement to tell me his story. His beginnings were humble, but he was now a rich merchant, he said. The first steps are the interesting ones, and I should be able to tell his story here if his little girl had not wearied of her mother, who was in the next carriage, and come to sit on her father's knee. Her hair hung about her shoulders just as Doris's did five years ago, taking the date from the day that I journeyed in quest of the golden fleece. A winsome child, as I recall her to mind, with a little fluttering smile about her lips and a curious intelligence in her eyes. She said that she was tired, but had not been ill, and her father told me that long train journeys produced the same effect on her as a sea journey. She spoke with a pretty abruptness, and went away suddenly, I thought for good, but returned half an hour afterwards looking a little faint, I thought, green about the mouth, and smiling less frequently. But one cannot memorise all one's travelling companions completely, and these must have left me somewhere between Marseilles and Plessy, for after bidding me good-bye they said that I should be at Plessy in about two hours and a half, but must be sure to change at the next station, for which information I thanked them out of a great weariness of spirit, for this lag end of my journey dragged itself out beyond my patience. Plessy is a difficult

place to get at; and while waiting for the confounded correspondence, which was late, I seemed to lose heart, and nothing seemed to matter, not even Doris. But these are momentary capitulations of the intellect and the senses, and when I saw her pretty face on the platform I congratulated myself again on my wisdom in having sent her the telegram. How much pleasanter it was to walk with her to the hotel than to walk there alone! 'She is,' I said to myself, 'still the same pretty girl whom I so bitterly reproached for selfishness in Cumberland Place five years ago.' To compliment her on her looks, to tell her that she did not look a day older—a little thinner, a little paler, that was all, but the same enchanting Doris—was the facile inspiration of the returned lover. And we walked down the platform talking, my talk full of gentle reproof: Why had she waited up? There was a reason. 'She is going to tell me,' I said, 'that I may not come to her hotel.' A fool's act was the sending of that telegram, for it was it that brought her to the station to tell that it was impossible for her to allow me to stay at her hotel. But to argue about details with a woman, to get angry, is a thing that no one versed in the arts of love does, not after twenty-five.

We are in the hands of women always; it is they who decide, and our best plan is to accept the different hotel without betraying disappointment, or as little as possible. But we had not seen each other for so long that we could not part at once, and Doris said that I must come to her hotel and eat some supper. But I had dined on board the train, and all she could persuade me to have was a cup of chocolate. We talked for an hour, and then I left her, with a little melancholy in my heart, for after all I might not win Doris. 'Heavens! what have I let myself in for? Platonic afternoons and evenings in hotel sitting-rooms,' I said, 'and the moon looks coldly down the

street.' There was sleep for me that night; sleep must have come quickly; so great was the refreshment I experienced in the morning when my eyes opened and, looking through mosquito curtains (themselves symbols of the South), were delighted by the play of the sunlight flickering along the flower-papered wall. The impulse in me was to jump out of bed at once and to throw open *les croisées.* And what do you think I saw? Tall palm-trees in a dim, alluring atmosphere, and beyond them a blue sea almost the same tone as the sky. And what did I feel? Soft perfumed airs moving everywhere, rascally little airs that carried over (in my imagination) the intoxicating odour of a woman's breasts bathing in the sea. But why should such sweet scents and visions assail one, cruelly disappointed last night, and mayhap no more than an innocent victim decreed by fate to enjoy only in dreams? I closed my eyes, for at the moment Venus seemed to rise from the sea and come into my bedroom.

Forgive my sensuousness, dear reader; remember that it was the first time I breathed the soft Southern air, the first time I saw palm- and orange-trees; remember, too, that I am a poet, a modern Jason in search of a golden fleece. 'Is this the garden of the Hesperides?' I asked myself, for nothing seemed more unreal than the golden fruit hanging like balls of yellow worsted among dark and sleek leaves, reminding me of the fruit I used to see, when I was a child, under glass shades in lodging-houses; but I knew that I was looking upon orange-trees, and that the golden fruit growing amid the green leaves was the fruit I used to pick from the barrows when I was a boy; the fruit of which I ate so much in boyhood that I cannot eat it any longer; the fruit whose smell we associate with the pit of a theatre; the fruit that women never weary of, high and low. It seemed to me a wonderful thing that at last I should see oranges growing on

trees; and I was so happy that morning that I could not but wonder at my happiness, and seeking for a cause for it, I stumbled on the reflection that perhaps, after all, happiness is no more than a faculty for being surprised. The *valet de chambre* brought in my bath, and while I bathed and dressed I meditated on the luck of him who in middle age can be astonished by a blue sky, and still find the sunlight a bewitchment. But who would not be bewitched by the pretty sunlight that finds its way into the gardens of Plessy? Moreover, I knew I was going to walk with Doris by a sea blue as any drop-curtain, and as she came towards me, her parasol aslant, she seemed to be but a figure on a drop-curtain. 'Are we not all figures on drop-curtains, and is not all drop-curtain, and La Belle Hélène perhaps the only true reality?' Amused by the idea of Jason or Paris or Menelaus in Plessy, I asked Doris what music was played by the local orchestra, and she told me it played "The March of Aida" every evening. 'On the cornet,' I said, understanding at once that the mission of Plessy was to redeem one from the dailiness of existence, from Hebrew literature and its concomitants, bishops, vicars and curates; all these, especially bishops, are regarded as being serious, whereas French novels and their concomitants, pretty girls, are supposed to represent the trivial side of life. A girl becomes serious only when she is engaged to be married; the hiring of the house in which the family is reared is regarded as serious—in fact all prejudices are serious; every deflection from the normal, from the herd, is looked upon as trivial; and I suppose that this is right: the world could not do without the herd nor could the herd do without us—the eccentrics who go to Plessy in quest of a golden fleece instead of putting stoves in the parish churches (stoves and organs are always regarded as devilishly serious, and they are). Once I had a con-

versation with my archbishop about the Book of Daniel, and were I to write out his lordship's erudition I might even be deemed serious enough for a review in the *Church Gazette*, which sets me thinking that we have spent a great deal too much money already on Palestinian folklore, and that the bill will provoke our descendants—or should it be our ascendants?—to laughter. Do we descend from or ascend from? Another hard question I'm putting, as hard a one as the first: why should Matthew, Mark, Luke and John be regarded as more serious than pretty Doris's fluent conversation, or the melancholy twilight of his lordship's cathedral as more serious than the pretty Southern sunlight glancing along the seashore, lighting up the painted houses, and causing Doris to shift her parasol? A splendid article might be written on the trivial side of seriousness, but discussion is always trivial, and I shall be more serious in trying to recall the graceful movement of her waist, and the enframing of her face within a parasol. It is true that almost every face is pretty against distended silk full of sunlight and shadow, but Doris's! Memling himself never designed a more appealing little face. 'But Memling's monasticism is incompatible with this fabled sea,' I said, 'and those red hills reaching out into that blue bay. Her grace is Ionian, as her name tells,' and walking beside her in search of a restaurant it seemed to me that life was often strangely kind, even generous, or else by some inadvertence, mistake, or oversight, I was receiving more than my due; to speak more precisely, that I would receive certainly more than my due if——

'Why, yonder is the restaurant,' she said, flinging up her parasol, 'built at the end of those rocks.' Life was kindling, crackling, and I spoke with a lump in my throat of the first swallows, saying, 'The flocks will be here in three weeks.' 'Plessy will be full of us in three

weeks,' she said. 'We shall not be here,' I answered, my emotion cut short, or nearly, by the bill of fare.

We were the first arrivals at Plessy, and had the restaurant to ourselves, the waiters and cooks giving us all their attention. Would we have breakfast in the glass pavilion? How else shall I describe it? for it seemed to be all glass. The scent of the sea came through the window, and as I looked across the bay Doris's beauty seemed to shrink, 'overframed,' I said, 'by the vast dim beauty of the bay and hills. Doris, dear, forgive me if I am looking at this bay instead of you, but I've never seen anything like it before,' and feeling I was doing very poor justice to the emotions I was experiencing, I said, 'Is it not strange that all this is at once to me new and old? I seem, as it were, to have come into my inheritance.'

'Your inheritance! Am I not——'

'Dearest, you are. Say that you are my inheritance, my beautiful inheritance. And how many years have I waited for it!' As I took her in my arms she caught sight of the waiter, and turning from her I looked across the bay, my desire dying in the infinite sweetness blowing across the sea.

'Azure hills, not blue; hitherto I have only seen blue.'

'They're blue to-day because there is a slight mist, but they are in reality red.'

'A red-hilled bay,' I said, 'and all the slopes flecked with the white sides of villas.'

'Peeping through olive-trees.'

'Olive-trees, of course. I have never yet seen the olive; the olive begins at Avignon or thereabouts, doesn't it? It was dark night when we passed through Avignon.'

'You'll see very few trees here; only olives and ilex.'

'The ilex I know, and there is no more beautiful tree than the ilex.

Were not the crocuses that grew
Under that ilex-tree
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee?

A mere statement, but all is in statement.'

'The scent,' she said, 'that followed us this morning as we walked through the gardens came from a eucalyptus-tree hanging over a garden wall; the wind carried its scent after us.'

The arrival of the waiter with *hors d'œuvres* distracted our attention from the olive-tree to its fruit. I rarely touch olives, but that morning I ate many. Should we have mutton cutlets or lamb? Doris said the Southern mutton was detestable, and as we decided to eat lamb, an idea came into my head, and it was this, that I had been mistaken about Doris's beauty. Hers was not like any face that one may find in a panel by Memling. She was like something, but I could not lay my thoughts on the century that had foreseen her beauty nor the name of the artist that had emphasised it.

'A sail would spoil the beauty of the bay,' I said when the waiter brought in the coffee, and left us—we hoped for the last time. 'But how much more beautiful the bay is without a sail—why, I cannot tell,' and taking hands and going to the window we sat looking across the dimness.

'Why do you wish the bay sailless?' she asked.

'A great galley rowed by fifty men would look well under the curl of the headland. The bay is antiquity, and all the morning while talking to you a memory, or a shadow of a memory, has fretted in my mind like a fly in a pane. Now I know why I have been expecting a

nymph to rise out of those waves during breakfast. For a thousand years men believed that nymphs came up on those rocks, and that satyrs and their progeny might be met in the woods and on the hillsides. Only a thin varnish has been passed over these beliefs. One has only to look down into that blue sea-water to believe that nymphs swim about those rocks; and when we go for a drive among those hillsides we must keep a sharp look-out for satyrs. Now I know why I like this country. It is heathen. Those mountains are different from the shambling Irish hills from whence I have come! And you, Doris, you might have been dug up yesterday, though you are but two-and-twenty. You are a thing of yester age, not a bit like the little Memling head which I imagined you to be like when I was coming here in the train, nor like anything done by the Nuremberg painters. You are a Tanagra figure, and one of the finest. In you I read all the winsomeness of antiquity. But I must look at the bay now, for I may never see anything like it again; never have I seen anything like it before. Forgive me; remember that three days ago I was in Ireland, the day before yesterday I was in England, yesterday I was in Paris. I have come out of the greyness of the North. When I left Paris all was grey, and when the train passed through Lyons a grey night was gathering; now I see no cloud anywhere. You have been looking at the bay for the last three weeks, and cannot apprehend my admiration; *la Côte d'Azur* has become to you only palms and promenades. To me it is still antiquity. I shall always associate you with that bay. You will always be beautiful as long as I live, but Plessy may lose her beauty in a few days. Let me enjoy it while I may.'

'Perhaps I shall not outlast Plessy.'

'Yes, you will, for you are the same Doris, hardly a day older than you were when I saw you walk across the room

to the piano in your white dress, your gold hair hanging over your shoulders. It has darkened a little, that is all.'

'It is provoking you should see me when I am thin. I wish you had seen me last year, when I came from the rest cure. I went up more than a stone in weight. Every one said that I didn't look more than sixteen. I know I didn't, for all the women were jealous of me.' As I sat watching the dissolving line of the horizon, lost in a dream, I heard my companion say:—

'Of what are you thinking?'

'I'm thinking of something that happened long ago in that very bay.'

'Tell me about it'; and her hand sought mine for a moment.

'Would you like to hear it? I'd like to tell it, but it's a long, long story, and to remember it would be an effort. The colour of the sea and the sky is enough; the warmth of the sunlight penetrates me; I feel like a plant; the only difference between me and one of those palm-trees——'

'I am sure those poor palms are shivering. There is not enough heat here for them; they come from the South, and you come from the North.'

'I suppose that is so. They grow, but they don't flourish here. But my mood is not philanthropic; I cannot pity even a palm-tree at the present moment. See how my cigar smoke curls and goes out! It is strange, Doris, that I should meet you here, for some years ago it was arranged that I should come here——'

'With a woman?'

'Yes, of course. Could it be else? Our lives are woven along and across with women. Some men find the reality of their lives in women, others, as we were saying just now, in bishops.'

'Tell me about the woman who asked you to come

here? Did you love her? And what prevented you from coming here with her?'

'It is one of the oddest stories—odd only because it is like myself, for every character creates its own stories; we are like spools, and each spool fills itself up with a different-coloured thread. The story, such as it is, began one evening in Victoria Street at the end of a long day's work. A letter began it. She wrote asking me to dine with her, and her letter was most welcome, for I had no plans for that evening. Have you experienced that curious dread of life which steals through the twilight? It had just laid its finger on my shoulder when the bell rang, and I said, "My visitor is welcome, whoever she or he may be." The visitor would have only spent a few minutes with me, but Gertrude's letter promised a long and pleasant evening. She wrote: "I have not asked any one to meet you, but you will not mind dining alone with me. I hope you will be able to come, for I want to consult you on a matter about which I think you will be able to advise me." As I dressed I wondered what she could have to propose, and with my curiosity enkindled I walked to her house. The evening was fine—I remember it—and she did not live far from me; we were neighbours. You see I knew Gertrude pretty well, and I liked her. There had been some love passages between us, but I had never been her lover; our story had got entangled, and as I went to her I hoped that this vexatious knot was to be picked at last. To be Gertrude's lover would be a pleasure indeed, for though a woman of forty, a natural desire to please, a witty mind and pretty manners, kept her young; she had all the appearance of youth; and French gowns and underwear that cost a little fortune made her a woman that one would still take a pleasure in making love to. It would be pleasant to be her lover for many reasons. There were disadvantages, however; for

Gertrude, though never vulgar herself, liked vulgar things. Her friends were vulgar; her flat, for she had just left her husband, was opulent, over-decorated; the windows were too heavily curtained, the electric light seemed to be always turned on, and as for the pictures—we won't talk of them, for Gertrude herself was one of them, a salon picture. But no, I'll not be unjust to Gertrude, who was gifted with a pretty cooing manner and straight hips, from which white dresses hung gracefully, especially when she came forward, shedding an odour of orris root, with such words in her mouth as: "Sit by me and tell me what you have been doing." Nor could one say for certain that her advances were studied.'

'Probably studied and spontaneous, both,' Doris said.

'I see you appreciate, but you always could appreciate.'

'And to make amends for the familiarity of pressing your hand to her bosom she would say, "I hope you will not mind dining alone with me," and immediately would propound a little theory that two is company, and three is a county council, unless indeed the three consist of two men and one woman, for a woman cannot be said to be happy except when she is talking to two men, woman being at heart a polyandrist.'

'Doris, you know me so well that you can invent my women.'

'Yes, I think I can. You have not changed, and I have not forgotten, though we have not seen each other for five years; and now go on, tell me more about Gertrude.'

'Well, sitting beside her on the sofa——'

'Under the shaded electric light,' interrupted Doris.

'—I tried to discover the reason of her invitation to dinner; for she had said in her letter that she wished to talk to me about some matter on which she thought I could advise her. Was Gertrude going to ask me to

lend her money? If so, the loan would be a heavy one, more than I could afford to lend. That is the advantage of knowing rich people; when they ask for money they ask for more than one can afford to lend, and one can say with truth, "Were I to lend you five hundred pounds, I should not be able to make ends meet at the end of the year." But Gertrude was not of the borrowing kind. I pressed her to tell me, and just before the servant came into the room she turned round, saying that she had sent for me for she wished to speak to me about a yacht. Imagine my surprise. "To speak to me about a yacht!" I said. "Now if it had been about a picture."

'A moment after, the servant announced that dinner was ready, and I had to wait for her story till he left the room. She wished to visit Greece and the Greek Islands, but she did not dare to travel in Greece alone for six months. It was difficult to find a man who was free and whom one could trust. She thought she could trust me, and remembering that I had once liked her, she said: "Perhaps you do still, and you will not bore me by claiming rights over me. I don't mind your making love to me, but I don't like rights. You know what I mean. You will not pursue me when we return to England. You know what I have suffered from such pursuits; you know all about the last." A woman will sometimes paint her portrait in a single phrase; not paint, but indicate in half a dozen lines her whole moral nature, and Gertrude exists in the words I have quoted just as God made her. And now I have to tell you about the pursuit. When Gertrude mentioned it I had forgotten it; a blankness came into my face, and she said, "Don't you remember?" "Of course, of course," I answered.

'One day after lunch Gertrude, getting up, had walked unconsciously towards me, and quite naturally I took her in my arms, and when I had told her how much I liked

her, and the pleasure I took in her company, she promised to meet me at a hotel in Lincoln; but two days before the trysting day she sent for me, and told me that she would have to send me away. I was overcome, for I liked Gertrude, and a long hour was spent begging of her to tell why she had come to this determination. One says unjust things, one accuses a woman of cruelty, asking her if she likes to play with a man as a cat plays with a mouse. But Gertrude, though she seemed distressed at my accusations, refused to give me any explanation of her conduct; tears came into her eyes—they seemed like genuine tears—and it was difficult to believe that she had taken all this trouble merely to arrive at this inexplicable and most disagreeable end. Months passed by without my hearing anything of Gertrude, till one day she sent me a little present, and in response to a letter she invited me to come to see her in the country. Whilst walking through some beautiful woods in Berkshire she told me the reason why she had not gone to Lincoln. A Pole whom she had met at the gambling-tables at Monte Carlo was pursuing her, threatening that if he saw her with any other man he would murder her and her lover. This tale seemed incredible, but when she entered into details, there could be no doubt that she was telling the truth, for had she not on one occasion very nearly lost her life through this man? They were in Germany together, she and the Pole; he had locked her up in her room without food for many hours, and coming in suddenly he pressed the muzzle of a pistol against her temple and pulled the trigger. Fortunately, it did not go off. "It was a very near thing," she said; "the cartridge was indented, and I made up my mind that if things went any further, I should have to tell my husband." "But things can't go further than an indented cartridge," I answered, "not in this world. What you tell me is terrible"; and we talked

for a long time, walking about the woods, fearing that the Pole might spring from behind every bush, the pistol in his hand. But he did not appear; she evidently knew where he was, or had made some compact with him. And, at the close of the day, I drove through the summer evening, not having got anything from Gertrude except a promise that if she should find herself free she would send for me. Weeks and months went by, during which I saw Gertrude occasionally; you see, love-stories, once they get entangled, remain entangled; that is what makes me fear that we shall never be able to pick the knot that you have tied our story into. Misadventure followed misadventure. It seems to me that I behaved very stupidly on many occasions; it would take too long to tell you how, when I met her at the theatre, I did not do exactly what I should have done; and on another occasion how I happened to be seriously unwell, and so on, and so on, until, resolved to bring matters to a crisis, Gertrude sent me this invitation to dinner; and we left the dining-room talking of the yacht she had hired—the schooner, the captain, the crew, everything for six months. I could not accept her hospitality for so long a time. Gertrude was the richer, but at least a third of the upkeep of the yacht must come out of my pocket.

'The prospect of a six months' cruise among the Greek Islands kindled my imagination, and while listening to Gertrude I was often in spirit far away, landing perchance at Cyprus, exalted at the prospect of visiting the Cyprians' temple; or perchance standing with Gertrude on the deck of the yacht watching the stars growing dim in the east; the sailors would be singing at the time, and out of the ashen moonlight a wind would come, and again we would hear the ripple of the water parting as the jib filled and drew the schooner eastward. I imagined how, half an hour later, an island would appear against the golden sky,

a lofty island lined with white buildings, perchance ancient fanes. "What a delicious book my six months with Gertrude will be!" I said as I walked home, and the title of the book was an inspiration, "An Unsentimental Journey." It was Gertrude's own words that had suggested it. Had she not said that she did not mind my making love to her, but she did not like rights? and I imagined how every evening when the lover left her the chronicler would sit recording his impressions, hearing the water lapping against the vessel's side. Very often he would continue writing until the pencil dropped from his hand, for an immediate note-taking would be necessary, so fugitive are impressions, and his feelings, emotions, their waxing and their waning he would observe as an astronomer observes the course of a somewhat erratic star, and his descriptions of himself and of her would be interwoven with descriptions of the seas across which Menelaus had gone after Helen's beauty—beauty, the noblest of man's quests.

'For once Nature seemed to me to put into the hands of the artist a subject perfect in its every part; the end especially delighted me, for I had no difficulty in imagining our good-byes at Plymouth or Portsmouth or Hull, wherever we might land. "Well, Gertrude, good-bye. We have spent a very pleasant six months together; I shall never forget our excursion. But this is not a rupture; I may hope to see you some time during the season? You will allow me to call about tea-time?" And she would answer, "Yes, you may call. You have been very nice." Each would turn away sighing, conscious of a little melancholy in the heart, for all partings are sad; but at the bottom of the heart there would be a sense of relief, of gladness—that gladness which the bird feels when it leaves its roost: there is nothing more delicious perhaps than the first beat of the wings. I forget now whether I looked forward most to the lady or to the book. The book would have

been wonderful; I could not have the book without the lady, and if the winds had been more propitious, I might have written a book that would have compared favourably with eighteenth-century literature, for the eighteenth century was cynical in love: while making love to a woman a gallant would often consider a plan for her subsequent humiliation. Goncourt——'

'But, dear one, finish about the yacht.'

'Well, it seemed quite decided that Gertrude and I were to go to Marseilles to meet the schooner; but the voyage from the Bay of Biscay is a stormy and a tedious one; the weather was rough all the way, and she took a long time to get to Gibraltar. She passed the strait signalling to Lloyd's; we got a telegram; everything was ready; my yachting clothes had come from the tailors, shoes from the shoemaker, and quantities of things from here, there and everywhere; but after that telegram no news came, and one evening Gertrude told me she was beginning to feel anxious; the yacht ought to have arrived at Marseilles. Three or four days passed, and then we read in the paper—the *Evening Standard*, I think it was—that the *Ring-Dove*, a large schooner, had sunk off the coast while making for the Bay of Plessy. Had she passed that point over yonder, no doubt she would have been saved; all hands were lost, the captain, seven men, and my book.'

'Good Heavens, how extraordinary! And what became of Gertrude? Were you never her lover?'

'Never. We abstained while waiting for the yacht. Then she fell in love with somebody else; she married her lover; and now he deplores her; she found an excellent husband, and died in his arms.'

At every moment I expected Doris to ask me how it was that, for the sake of writing a book, I had consented to go away for a six months' cruise with a woman whom I didn't love. But there was a moment when I loved

her—the week before Lincoln. Whether Doris agreed tacitly that my admiration of Gertrude's slender flanks and charm of manner and taste in dress justified me in agreeing to go away with her, I don't know; she did not trouble me with the embarrassing question I had anticipated. 'Tis strange that people never ask the embarrassing questions one foresees? She asked instead with whom I had been in love during the past five years, and this, too, embarrassed me, though not as much as the other question would have done. To say that since I had seen Doris I had led a chaste life, would be at once incredible and ridiculous. And sighing a little, I spoke of an attachment that had lasted many years which had come to an end at last; and fearing that Doris would ask if it had come to an end through weariness, it seemed well to add that the lady had a daughter growing up, and that it was for the girl's sake we agreed to bring our love-story to a close. We had, however, promised to remain friends. Doris's silence embarrassed me a little, for she didn't ask any questions about the lady and her daughter; and it was hard to tell from her manner whether she believed that this lady comprised the whole of my love life for the last five years, and if she thought I had really broken with her. It seemed to me wise to keep my eyes averted from Doris, and then I began to feel that her disbelief mattered little, so long as it did not prejudice my chances, and fell to thinking that under a sky as blue and amid Nature poetical as a drop-curtain one's moral nature dozes. Yet there is an English church at Plessy, but really! Dear little town, town of my heart, where the local orchestra plays "The March of Aida" and "La Belle Hélène"! If I could inoculate you, reader, with the sentiment of the delicious pastoral, you would understand why, all the time I was at Plessy, I looked upon myself

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as a hero of legend, whether of the Argonauts or the siege of Troy matters little. Returning from Mount Ida after a long absence, after presenting in imagination the fairest of women with the apple, I said :—

'You asked me whom I had been in love with; now tell me, with whom have you been in love?'

'For the last three years I have been engaged to be married.'

'And you are still engaged?'

She nodded, her eyes fixed on the blue sea, and I said, laughing, that it was not of a marriage or an engagement to be married that I spoke, but of the beautiful irrepressible caprice.

'You wouldn't have me believe that no passion has caught you and dragged you about for the last five years, just as a cat drags a little mouse about?'

'It is strange that you should ask me that, for that is exactly what happened.'

'Really?'

'Only that I suffered much more than any mouse ever suffered.'

'Doris, tell me. You know how sympathetic I am; you know I shall understand. All things human interest me. If you have loved as much as you say, your story will—— I must hear it.'

'Why should I tell it?' and her eyes filled with tears. 'I suffered horribly. Don't speak to me about it. What is the good of going over it all again?'

'Yes, there is good; much good comes of speaking; if this love-story is over, if there be no possibility of reviving it, tell it, and in telling the bitterness will pass from you. Who was this man? How did you meet him?'

'He was a friend of Albert's. Albert introduced him.'

'Albert is the man you are engaged to? The old story, the very oldest. Why should it always be the

friend? There are so many other men, but it is always the friend who attracts.' And I told Doris the story of a friend who had once robbed me, and my story had the effect of drying her tears. But they began again as soon as she tried to tell her own story. There could be no doubt that she had suffered. Things are interesting in proportion to the amount of ourselves we put into them; Doris had clearly put all her life into this story; a sordid one, it may seem to some, a story of deception and lies, for of course Albert was deceived as cruelly as many another good man. But Doris must have suffered deeply, for at the memory of her sufferings her face streamed with tears. As I looked at her tears I said, 'It is strange that she should weep so, for her story differs nowise from the many stories that blot the happiness of men and women. She will tell me the daily and beautiful story of lovers forced asunder by fate, and this spot is, no doubt, a choice one in which to hear her story.' On raising my eyes I admired once again the drooping shore and the serrated line of mountains sweeping round the bay, bathed in colour intense as musk; and when my thoughts returned to Doris, I could see she was wholly immersed in her own sorrow.

'As soon as you knew you loved him, you resolved to see him no more?'

Doris nodded.

'You sent him away before you yielded to him?'

She nodded, and looking at me through tears that made her eyes seem still more beautiful, she told me that they had both felt that it was impossible to deceive Albert.

'We resisted till flesh and blood could bear it no longer.'

All love-stories are alike in this; they all contain what the reviewers call "sordid details." But if Tristan had not

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taken advantage of King Mark's absence on a hunting expedition, the world would have been the poorer of a great love-story; and what, after all, does King Mark's happiness matter to us—a poor passing thing, whose life was only useful in this, that it gave us an immortal love-story? And if Wagner had not loved Madame Wesendonck, and if Madame Wesendonck had not been unfaithful to her husband, we should not have had *Tristan*. Who then would, for the sake of Wesendonck's honour, destroy the score of *Tristan*? Nor is the story of Tristan the only one, nor the most famous. There is also the story of Helen. If Menelaus' wife had not been unfaithful to him, the world would have been the poorer of the greatest of all poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Dear me, when one thinks of it one must admit that art owes a good deal to adultery. Children are born of the marriage, stories of the adulterous bed, and the world needs both—stories as well as children. Even my little tale would not exist if Doris had been a prudent maiden, nor would it have interested me to listen to her that day by the sea, if she had nought to tell me but her unswerving love for Albert. Her story is not what the world calls a great story, and it would be absurd to pretend that if a short-hand writer had taken it down his report would compare with the stories of Isolde and Helen, but I heard it from her lips, and her tears and her beauty replaced the language of Wagner and of Homer; and so well did they do this, that I am not sure that the emotion I experienced in listening to her was less than that which I have experienced before a work of art.

'Do you know?' she began—'perhaps you don't, perhaps you've never loved enough to know the anxiety one may feel for the absent. We had been together all day once, and when we bade each other good-bye we agreed that we should not see each other for two days, till Thursday;

but that night in bed an extraordinary desire took hold of me to know what had become of him. I felt I must hear from him; one word would be enough. But we had promised. It was stupid, it was madness, yet I had to take down the telephone, and when I got into communication, what do you think the answer was?—"Thank God you telephoned. I've been walking about the room nearly out of my mind, feeling that I should go mad if the miracle did not happen."'

'If you loved Ralph better than Albert——'

'Why didn't I give up Albert? Albert's life would have been broken and ruined if I had done that. You see he has loved me so many years that his life has become centred in me. He is not one of those men who like many women. Outside of his work nothing exists but me. He doesn't care much for reading, but he reads the books I like. I don't know that he cares much about music for its own sake, but he likes to hear me sing just because it is me. He never notices other women; I don't think that he knows what they wear, but he likes my dresses, not because they are in good taste, but because I wear them. One can't sacrifice a man like that. What would one think of oneself? One would die of remorse. So there was nothing to be done but for Ralph to go away. It nearly killed me.'

'I'm afraid I can give you no such love; my affection for you will prove very tepid after such violent emotions.'

'I don't want such emotions again: I could not bear them, they would kill me; even a part would kill me. Two months after Ralph left I was but a little shadow. I was thinner than I am now, I was worn to a thread, I could hardly keep body and skirt together, as the saying is.'

We laughed at Doris's little joke; and we watched it curling and going out like a wreath of cigarette smoke.

'But did you get no happiness at all out of this great love?'

'We were happy only a very little while.'

'How long?'

Doris reflected.

'We had about six weeks of what I should call real happiness, the time while Albert was away. When he came back the misery and remorse began again. I had to see him—not Albert, the other—every day; and Albert began to notice that I was different. We used to go out together, we three, and at last the sham became too great, and Albert said he could not stand it any longer. "I prefer you should go out with him alone, and if it be for your happiness I'll give you up."'

'So you nearly died of love! Well, now you must live for love, liking things as they go by. Life is beautiful at the moment, sad when we look back, fearful when we look forward; but I suppose it's hopeless to expect a little Christian like you to live without drawing conclusions, liking things as they go by, as the nymphs do. Dry those tears; forget that man. You tell me it is over and done. Forget everything but the blue sky and sea and that my happiness would be to put the past out of your mind, to close your eyes to the future. I want you to eat and to sleep a great deal, and to get fatter, and to dream, and to read Theocritus, so that when we go to the mountains we shall be transported into antiquity. You must forget Albert and him who made you unhappy—he allowed you to look back and forwards.'

'I think I deserve some happiness; you see, I have sacrificed so much.'

At these words my hopes rose—shall I say like a balloon out of which a great weight of ballast has been thrown?—and so high did they go that failure seemed like Rossetti's little feather swimming in the gulf below.

'She "deserves some happiness,"' I said, 'and intends, I think, to make me her happiness.' Her words could bear no other interpretation; she had spoken certainly without thought, instinctively; Albert was away; why should she not take the happiness that I offered her? Would she understand that it was one thing to deceive Albert if he were with her, and another if he were a thousand miles away? Moreover, were we not by the Mediterranean? A sufficient excuse; and with Albert a thousand miles away it would be so easy for her to love me. She had said there was no question of her marrying anybody but Albert. To be unfaithful is not to be inconstant: an argument which I would use if I found that I had misunderstood her; but for the moment I did not dare to inquire further, for it would be painful to hear I had misunderstood her. But lest she might guess the cause of my silence, I said, not being able to think of anything more plausible:—

'You spoke, didn't you, of going for a drive?'

'We were speaking of happiness, but if you'd like to go for a drive, let us go, for there's no happiness like driving.'

'Isn't there?'

She pinched my arm, and with a choking sensation in the throat I asked her if I should send for a carriage.

'There will be time for a short drive before the sun-setting. You said you admired the hills—one day we will go to a hill town, to Florac, a beautiful town, delightfully placed among the hills, but we must start early in the morning, for the climb is a long one—a long winding road. But we might go as far as the point you have been admiring all the morning. You want to see the ilex-trees.'

'My dear, I want to see you.'

'Well, you're looking at me. Come, don't be disagreeable.'

'Disagreeable, Doris! I never felt more kindly in my

life, and am still wondering at the strange luck that has brought us together, and in such a well-chosen spot; no other would have pleased me as much.'

'Now why do you like the landscape? Tell me.'

'I cannot think of the landscape, Doris: I'm thinking of you, of what you said just now.'

'What did I say?'

'You said—I tried to remember the words at the time, but I have forgotten them, so many thoughts have passed through my mind since—you said—how did you word it?—after having suffered as much as you did, some share of happiness——'

'No, I didn't say that; I said, having sacrificed so much, I thought I deserved a little happiness.'

'So she knew what she was saying,' I said to myself. 'Her words were not casual,' but not daring to ask her if she intended to make me her happiness, I spoke about the landscape. 'You ask me why I like the landscape? Because it leads my thoughts back to nymphs and satyrs, to those fortunate times when men wandering in woods caught sight of a white breast between the leaves, and could henceforth love no mortal woman. The disease was known as nympholepsy, and it was fairly common, so it would seem.'

'I'll not bring you to the mountains. Some peasant girl——'

'Fie! Doris, I have never liked peasant girls. My antiquity is eighteenth-century. But, Doris, good Heavens! what ghostly trees are these? only white trunks and branches.'

'I think they are called plantains.'

'You are guessing. I must ask the coachman. Coachman, what trees are these?'

'I think, sir, they are called plantains.'

'You only think. Stop and I'll ask the passers-by.'

'Sont des plantains, Monsieur.'

'Well, I told you so,' Doris said, laughing.

Beyond this spectral avenue, on either side of us there were fields, and Doris murmured:—

'See how flat the country is, to the very feet of the hills, and the folk working in the fields are pleasant to watch.'

I declared that I could not watch them, nor could you, reader, if you had been sitting by Doris, and had come away from months of long toil.

'My dear, my dear, remember that we are in an open carriage.'

'What do those folks matter to us?'

'My dear, if I don't like it?'

'To see you and not possess you, not to hold your face in my hands just as one holds a vase, is——'

'Is what?'

'A kind of misery. I long to possess you. Fancy my disappointment if, on digging among these mountains, I were to find a beautiful vase, and some one were to say, "You may look at it, but not touch it."'

'Do you love me as well as that?' she answered, somewhat moved, for my words expressed a genuine emotion.

'I do indeed, Doris.'

'We might get out here. I want you to see the view from the hill-top.'

And telling the driver that he need not follow us, to stay and rest his panting horse, we walked on, myself thinking only of kissing Doris. Even 'empty kisses are sweet,' I said, quoting Theocritus. She did not answer, and I had perforce to notice how the road bent round the shoulder of the hill to enter the village in the dip between the hills, a double line of houses—not much more—facing the sea, a village where we might go to have breakfast. After leaving the village the road doubled round some rocks

and disappeared behind a group of trees, and when it reappeared it was ascending the hills in front of us, to enter another village—this time a hill village—and so on around the coast of Italy. Even with the thought of Doris's kisses in my mind, I could admire the road and the curves of the bay and the colour, as beautiful as a Barbizon, for the twilight was gathering the sea and sky into one tone, or what seemed to be one tone.

'You wanted to see olive-trees—those are olives.'

'So those are olives! Do I at last look upon olives?'

'Are you disappointed?'

'Yes and no. The white gnarled trunk makes even the young trees seem old. The olive is like an old man with skimpy legs. It seems to me a pathetic tree. One does not like to say it is ugly, it is not ugly, but it would be puzzling to say wherein lies its charm, for it throws no shade, and is so grey—nothing is so grey as the olive. I like the ilex better.'

Where the road dipped there was a group of ilex-trees, and it was in their shade that I kissed Doris, and the beauty of the trees helps me to appreciate the sentiment of those kisses, and the kisses to remember that road and a passage in Theocritus. Doris—her very name suggests antiquity, so it was well that she was kissed by me under ilex-trees; true that I had kissed her before, but that earlier love-story has not found a chronicler, and probably it never will. I like to think that the beauty of the ilex is answerable, perhaps, for Doris's kisses—in a measure. Her dainty grace, her Tanagra beauty, seemed to harmonise with that of the ilex, for there is an antique beauty in this tree that we find in none other. Theocritus must have composed many a poem beneath it. It is the only tree that the ancient world could have cared to notice; and if it were possible to carve statues of trees, I am sure that the ilex is the tree sculptors would choose. The beech

and the birch, all the other trees, only began to be beautiful when men invented painting. No other tree shapes itself out so beautifully as the ilex, lifting itself up to the sky so abundantly and with such dignity—a very queen in a velvet gown is the ilex-tree; and we stood looking at the group, admiring its glossy thickness, till suddenly the ilex-tree went out of my mind, and I thought of the lonely night that awaited me.

'Doris, dear, it is more than flesh and blood can bear. My folly lay in sending the telegram. Had I not sent it you wouldn't have known by what train I was coming; you would have been fast asleep in your bed, and I should have gone straight to your hotel.'

'But, darling, you wouldn't compromise me. Every one would know that we stayed at the same hotel.'

'Dearest, it might happen by accident, and were it to happen by accident what could you do?'

'All I can say is that it would be a most unfortunate accident.'

'Then I have come a thousand miles for nothing. This is worse than the time in London when I left you for your strictness. Can nothing be done?'

'Am I not devoted to you? We have spent the whole day together. Now I don't think it's at all nice of you to reproach me with having brought you on a fool's errand.' And we quarrelled a little until we reached the carriage. Doris was angry, and when she spoke again it was to say, 'If you are not satisfied you can go back. I'm sorry. I think it's most unreasonable that you should ask me to compromise myself.'

'And I think it's unkind of you to suggest that I should go back, for how can I go back?'

She did not ask me why—she was too angry at the moment—and it was well she did not, for I should have been embarrassed to tell her that I was fairly caught. I

had come a thousand miles to see her, and could not say I was going to hop into *le Côte d'Azur* again because she would not let me stay at her hotel, for the misery of the return journey would be unendurable. No, there was nothing to do but to wait, and hope that life, which is always full of accidents, would favour us; for Doris was clearly anxious that an opportunity should occur, only she did not wish to compromise herself. Better think no more about it. Ah, if we could cease thinking life would be easier and less interesting.

There were many little things which helped the time away, else Plessy would have been accursed. Doris went every evening to a certain shop to fetch two eggs that had been laid that morning, for it was necessary that she should eat two eggs beaten up with milk between the first and second breakfast, and it was amusing to pick my way through the streets, carrying her eggs back to the hotel for her. She dined with me at my hotel, and after dinner she sang, and when she had played many things that she used to play to me in the old days, it was time for her to go to bed, and I accompanied her back to her hotel.

'Good-night,' she said, and I wended my lonely way, asking myself if I had said anything that would prejudice my chances of winning her, if I had omitted to say anything that might have inclined her to yield. One lies awake at night thinking of the mistakes one has made, breaking out suddenly with 'Good Heavens! how stupid it was of me not to have used a certain argument. It might have been well to have spoken more tenderly, displaying a more Christian spirit, omitting all that talk about nymphs, dryads, fauns and satyrs.' Alas! in the heat of the moment we say more than we intend, though it is quite true that, as a rule, it is well to insist that there is no such thing as our lower nature, that every-

thing about us is divine. So constituted are we that the mind accepts the convention, and what we have to do is to keep to the convention, just as in opera. Singing appears natural so long as the characters do not speak. Once they speak they cannot go back to music; the convention has been broken. As in Art, so it is in life. Tell a woman that you have no dreams beyond the perfect circle of her breast, and she will give herself to you unconscious of sin.

I must have fallen asleep thinking of these things, and have slept soundly, for I remembered nothing until the servant knocked, not even that before parting Doris had arranged that I was to call an hour earlier than usual at her hotel. I was to be there at half-past ten, for we were going to drive to Florac, and while I dressed, and in the carriage going thither, I cherished the hope that perhaps I might be able to persuade Doris into a private room. A reason would be hard to find, for the public room would be empty, and crowds of waiters would gather about us like rooks, each trying to entice us towards his table.

The village of Florac is high up among the hills, built along certain ledges of rock overlooking the valley, and going south in the train one catches sight of many towns like it built among mountain declivities, hanging out like nests over the edge of precipices, showing against red backgrounds. These mediæval towns were built, no doubt, in these strange places because of the security that the hill-top gives against raiders. One can think of no other reason, for it is hard to believe that in the fifteenth century men were so captivated with the picturesque that for the sake of it they would drag every necessary of life several hundred feet above the plain, probably by difficult paths—the excellent road that wound along the edge of the hills, now to the right, now to the left,

looping itself round every sudden ascent like a grey ribbon round a hat, did not exist when Florac was built. On the left the ground shelves away into the valley, down towards the sea, and olives were growing along all these hillsides, and above us were olive-trees, with here and there an orange orchard, the golden fruit shining among the dark leaves. We were interested in this picturesque country, and would have observed it closely if we had not been so eager about each other. Every now and again some sudden aspect interrupted our conversation; the bay, as it swept round the carved mountains, looking in the distance more than ever like an old Italian picture of a time before painters began to think about values and truth of effect, when the minds of men were concerned only with beauty, as mine was, for every time I looked at Doris it occurred to me that I had never seen anything prettier, and not only her face, but her talk still continued to enchant me. She was always so eager to tell me things, that she must interrupt, and these interruptions were so delightful that I identified them with her, and so closely that I can remember how our talk began when we got out of the suburbs. The sun was shining, and Doris asked me to hold her parasol for her; but the road zigzagged so constantly that I never shifted the parasol in time, and a ray would catch her just in the face, adding perhaps to the freckles—there were a few down that little nose, which was always pleasant to look upon. By the last villa was a eucalyptus-tree, and as we passed it Doris began one of those little confessions that one hears only from a woman one is making love to, or it may be that we only remember them when we are in love. Be this as it may, it delighted me to hear Doris say, 'This is the first time I have ever lived alone, that I have ever been free from questions. It was a pleasure to remember suddenly, as I was dressing, that

no one would ask me where I was going, that I was just like a bird, free to spring off the branch and to fly. At home there are always people round one: somebody is in the dining-room, somebody is in the drawing-room; and if one goes down the passage with one's hat on there is always somebody to ask, "Where are you going?" and if you say you don't know, they say, "Are you going to the right or to the left, because if you are going to the left I should like you to stop at the apothecary's to ask——"'

'Family life,' I said, 'degrades the individual, and is only less harmful than socialism because one can escape from it. . . . But, Doris, you're not ill! You are looking better.'

'I was weighed this morning, and I have gone up two pounds. You see, I am amused, and a woman's health is mainly a question whether she is amused—whether somebody is making love to her.'

'Making love! Doris, dear, there is no chance of making love to anybody here. That is the only fault I find with the place; the sea, the bay, the hill towns, everything I see is perfect in every detail, only the essential is lacking. I was thinking, Doris, that for the sake of your health we might go and spend a few days at Florac.'

'My dear, it would be impossible. Everybody would know that I had been there.'

'Maybe, but I don't agree. However, I am glad that you have gone up two pounds. I am sure that what you need is mountain air. The seaside is no good at all for nerves. I have a friend in Paris who suffers from nerves and has to go every year to Switzerland to climb the Matterhorn.'

'The Matterhorn!'

'Well, the Matterhorn or Mont Blanc. Last year I

wrote asking him why I should not have written—I have forgotten what—and he answered, "Avec mes pieds sur des glaciers je ne puis m'arrêter pour vous expliquer les trois passés."'

Doris laughed and was interested, for I had introduced her some years ago to the man who had written this letter; and then we discussed the *fussent* and the *eussent été*, and when our knowledge of the French Grammar was exhausted we returned to the point whence we had come, whether it was possible to pass three days in the hotel at Florac—in the interests of her health, of course.

'It may be that what I need is mountain air. Plessy lies very low and is very relaxing.'

'Very.'

But though I convinced her that it would have been better for her cure if she had gone to Florac, I could do nothing to persuade her to pass three days with me in the inn there, and as we drove up through the town the only hope that remained in my mind was that she might be persuaded to breakfast in a private room. But the length of the dining-room dismayed me: numberless immaculate tablecloths, and a great array of waiters anxious to break the monotony of their day—'Waiting,' I said, 'for the swallows that will soon arrive from the north,' and whispered, 'Shall we breakfast in a private room?'

'No! I wouldn't dare to go into a private room before all these waiters.'

My heart sank again, and when Doris said, 'Where shall we sit?' I answered, 'Anywhere,' for I was hungry, and a box of sardines, a plate of butter, and the prospect of an omelette and a steak, put all thoughts of Doris for the moment out of my head, which was a good thing, for we babbled on, and the pleasure which each took in talking and hearing the other talk became noticeable to ourselves.

'I didn't interrupt you just now, I thought it would be cruel, for you were enjoying yourself so much,' said Doris, laughing.

'Well, I promise not to interrupt the next time—you were in the midst of one of your stories.'

It was not long before she was telling me another story, for Doris was full of stories. She observed life as it went by, and could recall what she had seen. Our talk had gone back to years before, to the evening when I first saw her cross the drawing-room in a white dress, her gold hair hanging over her shoulders; and in that moment, as she crossed the room, I had noticed a look of recognition in her eyes; the look was purely instinctive; she was not aware of it herself, but I could not help understanding it as a look whereby she recognised me as one of her kin. I had often spoken to her of that look, and we liked speaking about it, and about the time when we became friends in Paris. She had written asking me to go to see her and her aunt, and I found them in a strange little hotel, just starting for some distant suburb, going there to buy presents from an old couple, dealers in china and glass, from whom, Doris's aunt explained, she would be able to buy her presents fifty per cent. cheaper than elsewhere. It took us hours to get to that old, forgotten quarter, to the old quaint street where they lived, and it was like going back to the Middle Ages to see the two old-world Jews who read the Talmud among glass and china.

'Let me tell you,' cried Doris, 'what happened. The old man died two years ago, and his wife, who had lived with him for forty years, could not bear to live alone, so what do you think she did? She sent for her brother-in-law——'

'To marry him?'

'No, not to marry him, but to talk to him about her husband. You see, this couple had lived together for so

many years that she had become ingrained, as it were, in the personality of her late husband, her habits had become his habits, his thoughts had become hers. The story really is very funny,' and Doris burst out laughing, and for some time she could not speak for laughing. 'I am sorry for the poor man,' she said at last.

'For whom? For the brother-in-law?'

'Yes; you see, he is a dyspeptic, and he can't eat the dishes that his brother liked, but the wife can't and won't cook anything else.'

'In other words,' I said, 'the memory of brother Esau is poisoning brother Jacob.'

'That is it.'

'What a strange place this world is!' And then my mind drifted back suddenly. 'Oh, Doris, I'm so unhappy, I wish I had never come to Plessy.'

'Now, now, have a little patience. Everything comes right in the end.'

'We shall never be alone.'

'Yes, we shall. Why do you think that?'

'Because I can't think of anything else.'

'Well, you must think of something else. We're going to the factory where they make perfume, and I'm going to buy a great many bottles of scent for myself, and presents for friends. We shall be able to buy the perfume twenty-five per cent. or fifty per cent. cheaper.'

'Don't you think we might go to see the pictures? There are some in a church here.'

On inquiry we heard that they had been taken away, and I followed Doris through the perfume factory. Very little work was being done, only a few old women were stirring caldrons, and I listened wearily, for it did not interest me in the least, particularly at that moment, to hear that the flowers were laid upon layers of grease which absorbed the perfume, and that the grease was

got rid of by means of alcohol. The workrooms were cold and draughty, and the choice of what perfumes we were to buy took a long time. At last Doris decided that she would prefer three bottles of this, three of that, four of these, two of those, and five of heliotrope.

'And you like it, don't you, dear?'

'Yes, but what does it matter what I like?'

'Now, don't be cross. Don't look so sad.'

'I don't mind the purchase you made for your friends, but the purchase of heliotrope is really too cynical.'

'Cynical? Why is it cynical?'

'Because, dear, it is evocative of you, of that slender body moving among fragrances of scented cambrics, and breathing its own dear odour. Why do you seek to torment me?'

'But, dear one——'

I was not to be appeased, and sat gloomily in the corner of the carriage away from her. But she put out her hand, and the silken palm calmed my nervous irritation, and as the evening was growing chilly, I asked Doris if I might tell the coachman to stop his horses and raise the hood of the carriage. But every moment Doris reminded me that people were passing, and once she threw me off her into the corner of the carriage, where I fell to thinking that it would be unkind to leave her, for she was not very strong, and required somebody to look after her. As I was debating the question in my mind, Doris said:—

'You don't mind, dear, but before we go back to the hotel, I have a visit to pay.'

She had made many acquaintances among the elderly spinsters who lived in the different hotels *en pension*, and who would go away as soon as the visitors arrived, to seek another "resort" where the season had not yet commenced, and where they could be boarded and bedded

for ten francs a day. She had introduced me to Miss Tubbs and Miss Whitworth; we were dining with them that night, for Doris was urgent in her explanation of the circumstances which compelled us to dine with them at least once.

'But as we're going to spend the evening with them, I don't see the necessity——'

'Of course not, dear, but you haven't forgotten that you promised to go to see the Formans with me?'

'Miss Forman dined with us last night,' I answered.

'But her mother was not able to come,' Doris replied. 'I know they are very trite and conventional, but that is not their fault, it is how they were brought up. You will be nice to them, won't you? for they were very kind to me before you came, when I was all alone. They don't know anything about singing, but what does that matter?' were her last words, and the carriage stopped at the gate immediately after.

No form of human life that has ever come under my notice seemed so drab and insignificant as the life of this mother and daughter, but as a volume would be needed to bring it into view, I will pass on, saying only that it was a relief when Mrs. Forman asked Doris to sing. 'She will sing them everything she thinks they would like to hear,' I said, which she did; and when we rose to leave Mrs. Forman said, 'It's kind indeed of you to sing to us, an old woman and a middle-aged woman, and I hope you'll come to see us again, both of you.' 'What should bring me to see them again?' I asked myself, as I tried to get Doris away, for she lingered about the doorway with them, making plans, asking them to come to see her when they came to England, telling them that if her health required it and she came to Plessy again she would rush to see them. 'Why should she rattle on like that about the Formans, knowing well that

we shall never see them again?' I thought. Mrs. Forman insisted that her daughter should accompany us to the gate, and all the way there Doris begged of Miss Forman to come to dine with us; for we were dining with friends of hers, Miss Tubbs and Miss Whitworth; it would be so nice if she would come too. I offered up a prayer that Miss Forman might refuse, and she did refuse many times; but Doris was so pressing that she consented; but when we got into the carriage a thought struck her. 'No,' she said, 'I cannot go, for the dressmaker is coming this evening, and mamma is very particular about her gowns; she hates any fulness in the waist; the last time the gown had to go back—you must excuse me.'

'Good-bye, dear, good-bye,' I heard Doris crying, and I said to myself, 'How kind she is!'

'Now, my dear, aren't you glad that you came to see them? Aren't they nice? Isn't she good? And you like goodness.'

'Dear Doris, I like to discover your kind heart. You cannot have forgotten my saying to you that your pretty face was dependent upon your intelligence, and it is in a measure, but I have now to revise that judgment. I cannot but think now that some of its beauty, a third perhaps, is dependent on your heart, for I'm always catching you out in acts of kindness. Your two blind women, what has become of them?'

'So you haven't forgotten them. You used to say that it was wonderful that a blind woman should be able to get her living.'

'Of course it is. It has always seemed to me extraordinary that any one should be able to earn his living.'

'You see, dear, you have not been forced to get yours, and you do not realise that ninety per cent. of men and women have to get theirs.'

'But a blind woman! To rise in the morning in the knowledge that one has to go out to earn enough money to pay for her dinner; think of it! Getting up in the dark knowing that she must earn four, five, ten shillings a day, whatever it is. Every day the problem presents itself, and she always in the dark.'

'Do you remember her story?'

'I think so. She was once rich, wasn't she? In fairly easy circumstances, and lost her fortune. It all went away from her bit by bit. Don't tell me, for it is all coming back to me, how Fate in the story as you told it seemed like a black shadow stretching out a paw, grabbing some part of her income again and again, till the last farthing was taken. Even then Fate was not satisfied, and your friend must catch the smallpox and lose her eyes. But as soon as she was well she decided to come to England and learn to be a masseuse. I suppose she didn't want to stop in Australia, where she was known. How attractive courage is! And where shall we find an example of courage equal to that of this blind woman coming to England to learn to be a masseuse, and bearing with her life in the dark, going out to her work every day to earn her dinner, very often robbed by the girl who led her about?'

'How well you remember, dear!'

'Of course I do. Now, how was it? There was some sort of a love-story in this blind woman's life, not the conventional sentimental story which never happens, but a hint, a suggestion, of that passion which takes a hundred thousand shapes, finding its way even to a blind woman's life. Now don't tell me; it's all coming back to me. Something about a student who lived in the same house as she did; a very young man. They made acquaintance on the stairs, and became friends; but it was not with him she fell in love, but with a pal who came to share his

rooms, an older man with serious tastes, a great classical scholar, who used to read Greek tragedies aloud to her in the evening. I wonder if she expected him to marry her?'

'No, she knew he couldn't marry her, but that made no difference.'

'He was a doctor, wasn't he, who went out to Africa, and no sooner did he arrive there than he caught a fever, and the poor blind masseuse didn't hear anything of her loss for a long time, for her friend upstairs was afraid to come down to tell her? But at last the truth could be hidden from her no longer. How tragedy follows its victims, never leaving them!'

'Claiming always.'

'And now she sits alone in the dark, for it is easier to bear her solitude than the company of the pious people who would read to her if she would listen to the Bible. The charitable always want their money's worth. I only see her, of course, through your description, but if I see her truly, she was one of those who loved life, and life took everything from her!'

'Do you remember the story of the other blind woman?'

'Yes and no, only vaguely. She was a singer, wasn't she?' Doris nodded. 'And I think she was born blind, or lost her sight when she was three or four years old. You described her to me as a tall, handsome woman with dark crinkly hair, and a mouth like red velvet.'

'I don't think I said like red velvet, dear.'

'What then made me think of red velvet? Because you told me she had love affairs. Why not? and how wonderful to have a love affair with an unseen lover, like Psyche, but Judith would not have been silly like Psyche. She would not have opened her eyes. For only those the blind love remain gods, always young.'

'Ah, the blind are very sensitive, much more so than we are.'

'Perhaps.'

'I think Judith would have known the difference between a young man and a middle-aged. There was little she didn't know.'

'I daresay you're right. Without sight life is more intense and more vague. The sufferings of the blind are not ours. When Judith's lover is not speaking to her he is away; she is unable to follow him, and sitting at home she imagines him in society surrounded by others who are not blind. She doesn't know what eyes are, but she imagines them like—what? I haven't thought of her much lately, but I used to think of her when you told me the story, as standing on a platform in front of the public, calm as a Caryatid. She must have had a beautiful voice to have been able to get an engagement, a difficult thing to do in any circumstances—but in hers! And when her voice began to fail her she must have suffered, for her voice was her one possession, the one thing that distinguished her from others, the one thing she knew herself by, her personality as it were. She didn't know her face: she only knew herself when she sang, then she became an entity, as it were. Teaching couldn't recompense her for what she had lost, however intelligent her pupils might be, or however well they paid her. How did she lose her pupils?'

'I don't think there was any reason. She lost her pupils in the ordinary way; she was unlucky. As you were just saying, it was more difficult for her to earn her living than for those who could see; and Judith is no longer as young as she was: she isn't old, she is still a handsome woman; but in a few years . . . If old age pensions are to be granted they surely ought to be granted to blind women.'

'Yes, I remember the sentiment, only I am a little confused about the facts. You wrote a number of letters —how was it?'

'I felt that the thing to do was to get an annuity for Judith; I couldn't afford to give her one myself, so after a great deal of trouble I got into communication with a rich woman who was interested in the blind.'

'You are quite right, that was it. You must have written dozens of letters.'

'Yes, indeed; and all to no purpose. Judith knew the trouble I was taking, but the dread of the long evenings by herself began to prey upon her nerves, and she went off to Peckham to marry a blind man—quite an elderly man; he was over sixty. He taught music, like her; but though he only earned forty or fifty pounds a year, still she preferred to have somebody to live with than the annuity.'

'But I don't see why she should lose her annuity.'

'Don't you remember, dear, that the charitable woman drew back? not from any sordid motive, because she regretted her money, but for a fixed idea: she had learned from somebody that blind people shouldn't marry, and she didn't feel herself justified in giving her money to encouraging such marriages.'

'Was there ever anything so extraordinary as human nature? Its goodness, its stupidity, its cruelty! The woman meant well; one can't even hate her for it; it was just a lack of perception, a desire to live up to principles. That is what sets every one agog, trying to live up to principles, abstract ideas, as if truth were not a poor wandering comet for ever seeking an abode, and never finding one on earth nor yet in heaven.'

'You always liked those stories, dear. You said that you would write them.'

'Yes, but I'm afraid the pathos is a little deeper than I

could reach; only Tourguéneff could write them. But here we are at the Dogs' Home.'

'Don't talk like that—it's unkind.'

'I don't mean to be unkind, but I have to try to realise things before I can appreciate them.'

It did not seem in keeping that these two little spinsters, Miss Tubbs and Miss Whitworth, should pay for our dinners, but Doris said it was their wish to entertain us. Miss Tubbs asked me what wine I would drink. And in a moment of inadvertence I said 'Vin Ordinaire,' forgetting that the two shillings the wine would cost would probably mean that Miss Tubbs would very likely have to go without her cup of tea at five o'clock next day, so that her expenditure should not exceed her limit, and thinking how difficult life must be on the slippery rocks of incomes of one hundred and fifty a year, my heart went out to the poor little gentlefolk, roving from one boarding-house to another, seeking the cheapest. Poor little gentlefolk, the odds-and-ends of existence, the pence and threepenny-bits of human life!

The evening wore away, myself talking literature to a company of a dozen or more spinsters, all plain and elderly, who, when they had heard enough about the Renaissance, asked Doris to sing. Inadequate remarks about music and about the other arts are as common in London drawing-rooms as in hotels, and life in these winter resorts would not have seemed to me so small and insignificant had not Doris possessed herself to the uttermost of me. Wherever human beings collect there is always to be found somebody of interest, but when one's interest is centred in one woman everybody else becomes an enemy; and I looked upon all these harmless spinsters as my enemies, and their proposals for excursions, and luncheons, and dinners caused me much misgiving. A love affair hangs upon a gossamer thread, one cannot be too careful, a woman's jealous tongue or the

arrival of some acquaintance might bring about a catastrophe, and that is why I tried to persuade Doris away from her friends.

One afternoon I said to her, 'I'm afraid I can't go to see Miss Tubbs this evening. Can't we devise something else to pass the afternoon away?'

As she could think only of another excursion to Florac, we took counsel of the waiter, who advised us to visit Carlaen Gardens, the property of a gentleman kind enough to throw them open to the public twice a week. Gardens find little favour with me—now and again an old English garden, but the well-kept horticultural is my abhorrence, and my heart sank when the coachman drew up his horses in front of a tall wrought-iron gate twenty feet high, with a naked pavilion behind it, and a woman seated at a table with a cash-box in front of her, who took a franc apiece, and told us that the money was to be devoted to a charitable purpose, and that we were now free to wander down a gravel walk, twenty feet wide, branching to the right and the left, along a line of closely-clipped shrubs, with a bunch of tall grasses here and a foreign fir there. 'A painter,' I said to Doris, 'would close his eyes,' and we, being artists, would do well to turn into one of the external walks overlooking the sea. 'Even here,' I continued, 'the neighbourhood of those variegated shrubberies has spoiled the sea for me. I cannot forget them.' Doris laughed, and I began to wonder if she knew how detestable they were.

'It is delightful to be here with you, Doris, but the sunlight is not enough for me, and now I must tell you that yesterday I was sorely tempted to go down to that bay to join the nymphs. Don't ask me if I believe that I should find a nymph to love me; one doesn't know what one believes, I only know that I am unhappy.'

'But why, dear, do you allow yourself to be unhappy?

Look at that lizard. He desires nothing but what he has got, light and warmth. Look at him.'

'And, Doris, would you like me to be as content as that lizard—to desire nothing more than light and warmth?'

Doris turned her eyes upon me, and her eyes seeming more beautiful even than the sunlight, I said:—

'If I don't become part of the great harmony, I must die.'

'But you do kiss me,' Doris answered wilfully, 'when the evening turns cold and the coachman puts up the hood of the carriage.'

'Wilful Doris! Pretty puss cat!'

'I'm not a puss cat; I'm not playing with you, dear. I feel the strain of these days; but you wouldn't have me tell you to stay at my hotel and to compromise myself before all these people?'

'These people! Those boarding-houses are driving me mad! That Miss Forman!'

'I thought you liked her. You said, "She is good and simple, without pretensions, interested in her mamma." And that is enough, according to yesterday's creed. You were never nicer than you were yesterday, speaking of her (I remember your words): you said, "The life of the heart is a deeper life than that of the intellect." Do you recant?'

'No, I recant nothing; only yesterday's truth is not to-day's. One day we are attracted by goodness, another day by beauty; and beauty has been calling me day after day: at first the call was heard far away, like a horn in the woods, but now the call has become more imperative, and all the landscape is musical. Yesterday, standing by those ancient ruins, it seemed to me as if I had been transported out of my present back to my original nature of two thousand years ago. The sight of those ancient columns

quickened a new soul within me; or I may say dis- The Lovers
interred a soul that had been overlaid, almost buried. The of Orelay
dead are never wholly dead; their ideas live in us, and in England I could not appreciate you as I do here; and the fault, if there be one, is chargeable to antiquity, which has taken hold of me, risen out of the earth and claimed me. Thy clothes I would put away——'

'Don't you like my hat?'

'Yes, I like it, but I am thinking of the Doris that lived two thousand years ago; she did not wear a hat. It is not only the beauty of your face that I desire, but all your beauty: the pink breast flowers, the pretty forearms, the belly so daintily designed, the round thighs, the well-jointed knees, the long calves, the sloping ankles, the thin, white feet. In those curved hands and thin transparent fingers with long red nails I see the nymph in my imagination, though I may never see her with mortal eyes.'

'Why should you not see me, dear?'

'I have begun to despair. All these boarding-houses and their inhabitants jar the spirit that this landscape has kindled within me. I want to go away with you where I may love you as the faun loved the nymph, for it is quite true that you remind me of antiquity, and in a way that I cannot explain, though it is quite clear to me.'

'But you do possess me, dear?'

'No, Doris, not as I wish. You know very well what I mean by possession, the possession of sight and of touch and of scent, and if I do not go away with you, Doris, where I can possess you wholly, this journey will be a bitter memory that will endure for ever. We must think, Doris, not only of the day that we live, but of the days in front of us; we must store our memories as the squirrel his nuts, we must have a winter hoard; and if some way be not found out of this dilemma, I shall remember you

as a collector recalls a vase which a workman handed to him and which slipped and was broken, or like a vase that was stolen from him; I cannot find a perfect simile, at least not at this moment; my speech is imperfect, but you will understand.'

'Yes, I understand, I think I understand.'

'If I do not get you, it will seem to me that I have lived in vain.'

'But, dear one, things are not so bad as that. We need not be in Paris for some days yet, and though I cannot ask you to my hotel, there is no reason why——'

'Doris, do not raise up false hopes.'

'I was only going to say, dear, that it does not seem to me necessary that we should go straight back to Paris.'

'You mean that we might stop somewhere at some old Roman town, at Arles in an eighteenth-century house. Oh, Doris, how enchanting this would be! I hardly dare to think, lest——'

'Lest what, dear? Lest I should deceive you?'

There was a delicious coo in her voice, the very love coo which cannot be imitated any more than the death-rattle; and exalted and inspired by her promise of herself, of all herself, I spoke in praise of the eighteenth century, saying that it had loved antiquity better than the nineteenth, and had reproduced its spirit.

'Is it not strange that, in the midst of reality, artistic conceptions always hang about me? But shall I ever possess you, Doris? Is it my delicious fate to spend three days with you in an old Roman town?'

'There is no reason why it shouldn't be. Where shall it be?'

'Any town would be enough with you, Doris; but let us think of some beautiful place;' and looking across the bay into the sunset, many old Roman towns rose up before

my eyes, classic remains mingling with mediæval towers, cathedral spires rising over walls on which Roman sentries had once paced. We could only spend our honeymoon in a town with a beautiful name—a beautiful name was essential—a name that it would be a delight to remember for ever after. Rocomadour imitated too obviously the sound of sucking doves, and was rejected for that reason. Cahor tempted us, but it was too stern a name; its Italian name, Devona, appealed to us; but, after all, we could not think of Cahor as Devona. And for many reasons were rejected Armance, Vezelay, Oloron, Correz, Valat, and Gedre. Among these, only Armance gave us any serious pause. Armance! A long evening was spent with *L'Indicateur des Chemins de fer* before us. 'Armance!' I said, interrupting Doris, who was telling me that we should lose our tickets by *le Côte d'Azur*. For in Doris's opinion it was necessary that we should leave Plessy by *le Côte d'Azur*. Her friends would certainly come to the station to see her off. 'That is a matter of no moment,' I said. 'At Marseilles we can catch an express train as fast, or nearly as fast, as *le Côte d'Azur*. It will take us to Armance in a few hours, and if——'

She asked me if Armance were a village or a town, and I answered, 'What matter?'—for everywhere in France there are good beds, good food and good wine—ay, and omelettes. We should do very well in any village. But suddenly two names caught my eye, Orelay and Verlancourt, and we agreed that we preferred either of these names to Armance.

'Which name shall give shelter to two unfortunate lovers flying in search of solitude?'

'Orelay is a beautiful name.'

'Orelay it shall be,' I said. 'Orelay is but a few hours from Marseilles. In a few hours——'

'You quite see, dear, that I could not travel all the way

to Paris—a journey of at least twenty-four hours would kill me, and I'm not strong; nothing tires me more than railway travelling. We must stop somewhere. Why not at Orelay?'

As this history can have but one merit, that of absolute truth, I confess that the subterfuge whereby Doris sought to justify herself to herself, delighted me. Perhaps no quality is more human than that of subterfuge. She might unveil her body—I was living in the hope of seeing her do so; but she could not completely unveil her soul. We may only lift a corner of the veil, and whosoever would do more displays but a skeleton, for where there is no subterfuge there is no life.

This story will be read, no doubt, by the young and the old, the wise and the foolish, by the temperate and the intemperate, but the subject-matter is so common to all men that it will interest every one, even ecclesiastics—every one except certain gentlemen residing chiefly in Constantinople, whose hostility to the lover on his errand is so well known, and so easily understandable, that I must renounce all hope of numbering them among the admirers of my own or Doris's frailty. But happily these gentlemen are rare in England, though it is suspected that one or two may be found among the reviewers on the staff of certain newspapers; otherwise how shall we account for the solitary falsetto voices in the choir of our daily and weekly press, shouting abstinence from the house-tops? But with the exception of these few critics every one will find pleasure in this narrative; even in aged men and women enough sex is left to allow them to take an interest in a love-story; in these modern days, when a book wanders, I may be able to count upon an aged Mother Abbess to be, outwardly perhaps a disapproving, but at heart a kind reader. This book may earn me her prayers, and through them heaven may be

opened to me. I count upon the ascetic male and female more than upon any other class for appreciation, for the imagination of those who have had no experience in love adventures will enkindle, and they will appreciate, perhaps more intensely than any other, the mental trouble that a journey to Orelay with Doris would entail, and after reading they will pray for us both.

It would take nearly five hours, according to the time-table, to get from Marseilles to Orelay; and these five hours would wear away in conversation with Doris, in talking to her of every subject except the subject uppermost in our mind. I should have kept a notebook, just as I had arranged to do when I thought I was going on the yachting excursion among the Greek Islands with Gertrude; but, having no notes, I must appeal to the reader's imagination. I must ask him to bear in mind the week of cruel abstinence I had endured, and to take it into his consideration; a reader must meet the author half-way, and you, dear, dear reader, can see me, if you try (in your mind's eye, of course), walking about the corridors, seeking the guard, asking every one I meet:—

'How far away are we now from Orelay?'

'Orelay? Nearly two hours from Orelay.'

Our heavy luggage had been sent on to Paris. We had with us a number of dressing-cases and bags, and the guard, who promised to take them out of the carriage for us, might not arrive in time. To find ourselves in Orelay without luggage! Impossible. So I went in search of the guard, and sought him—how many times?—up and down the long length of the train. You can see me, reader, can you not? walking about the train, imagining all kinds of catastrophes—that the train might break down, or that it might not stop at Orelay; or, a still more likely catastrophe, that the young lady might change her mind. What if that were to happen at the

last moment! Ah, if that were to happen I should have perchance to throw myself out of the train, unless peradventure I refrained for the sake of writing the story of a lover's deception. The transitional stage is an intolerable one, and I wondered if Doris felt it as keenly, and every time I passed our carriage on my way up and down in search of the guard, I stopped a moment to study her face as she sat with her eyes closed, perhaps dozing. How prosaic of her to doze on the way to Orelay! Why was she not as agitated as I?

And the question presented itself suddenly: Do women attach the same interest to love adventures as we do? Do women ask themselves as often as we do if God, the Devil, or Calamitous Fate will intervene between us and our pleasure? Will it be snatched out of our arms and from our lips? Perhaps never before—only once, in any case—did I experience an excitement so piercing as I experienced that day. As I write the sad thought floats past that such expectations will never be my lot again. The delights of the moment are behind me, but those of memory await me, and the old have a joy that the youths do not know—recollection. Tourguéneff said that, omitting to add that without memory we should not have known ourselves or others. We should have lived like the animals. How sad!

This is a point on which I would speak seriously to every reader, especially to my young readers; for it is of the first importance that all should select adventures that not only please them at the moment, but can be looked back upon with admiration, and for which they can offer up a mute thanksgiving. My life would not have been complete, a corner-stone would have been lacking, if Doris had not come to Orelay with me, for without her I should not have known the perfect beauty which abides in antiquity. Without more, as the lawyers say, we will return to Doris.

I asked her if she had been asleep? No, she had not slept, but to keep her eyes closed rested her. The sunlight fatigued her. The word "fatigue" awakened forebodings which I did not dare to utter even to myself, and to hide from her what was passing in my mind I tried to invent some conversation. Orelay—what a lovely name it was! Did she think the town would vindicate or belie its name? She smiled faintly and said her fatigue would pass when she stepped out of the train, and there was some consolation in the thought that her health would not allow her to go further than Orelay that day.

We decided to stay at the Hôtel des Valois. One of the passengers had spoken to me of this hotel; he had never stayed there himself, but he believed it to be an excellent hotel. But it was not his recommendation that influenced me, it was the name—the Hôtel des Valois. How splendid! And it was pleasant to find that the porters and the station-master were agreed that the Hôtel des Valois was as good as any other. So everything up to the present had turned out well, but if the Hôtel des Valois should prove unworthy of its name, all that went before would be worthless. At first sight it was disappointing. The courtyard was insignificant, only saved by a beautiful ilex-tree growing in one corner. A moment after I noticed that the porch of the hotel was pretty and refined—a curious porch it was, giving the hotel for a moment the look of an eighteenth-century English country house. The windows were numerous, with small panes, and one divined the hall beyond the porch. The hall delighted us, and I said to Doris, as we passed through, that the hotel must have been a nobleman's house some long while ago, when Orelay had a society of its own, perhaps a language, for in the seventeenth or the eighteenth century, Provençal or some other dialect

The Lovers of Orelay

must have been written or spoken at Orelay. We admired the galleries overlooking the hall, and the staircase leading to them. We seemed to have been transported into the eighteenth century; the atmosphere was that of a Boucher, a provincial Boucher perhaps, but an eighteenth-century artist, for all that. The doves that crowd round Aphrodite seemed to have led us right. We foresaw a large hushed bedroom with an Aubusson carpet in the middle of a parquet floor, writing-tables in the corners of the room or in the silken-curtained windows—the room that befitted my love of Doris, a room as large as a drawing-room, furnished like a drawing-room, with sofas and arm-chairs that we could draw round the fire, for part of my pleasure was to live in the intimacy of her dressing and her undressing. Is not love composed in a large measure of desire of intimacy, and if the affection that birds experience in making their nests be not imitated, love descends to the base satisfaction of animals who meet in obedience to an instinct and separate as soon as the instinct has been served. Birds understand love better than all animals, except man. Who has not thought with admiration of the weaver-birds, and of our own native wren? But the rooms that were offered to us corresponded in nowise with those that we imagined the doors of the beautiful galleries would lead us into. The French words *chambre meublée* will convey an idea of the rooms we were shown into; for do not the words evoke a high bed pushed into the corner, an eider-down on top and a tall dusty window facing the bed with skimpy red curtains and a vacant fireplace? There were, no doubt, a few chairs—but what chairs! The voluptuous dream I had cherished of sitting with Doris before a beautiful eighteenth-century chimney-piece, talking to her and watching her the while as she prepared herself for the night—looking on at the letting down of her hair and the brushing of it—a woman versed in the

art of love prepares herself for bed so imperceptibly that any attempt to indicate a stage in her undressing breaks the harmony; for there is a harmony in the way she passes from the moment when she sits in her evening dress playing with her bracelets to the moment when she drops her nightgown over her head and draws her silk stockings off her legs, white as milk, kicking her little slippers aside before she slips over the edge and curls herself into the middle of a bed broad as a battlefield—all the voluptuous dream that I cherished fell before the sight of those high beds; the entire fabric of my love, the nest in which we should enjoy it, the fluttering of pinions and the sensation of soft scents and delicate linen, were swept away.

The scene was at once tragic and comic. It was of vital importance to Doris and myself to find a bedroom in which we could love each other, and we were astonished at the indifference of the waiter: an old man, short and thick, slow on the feet from long service, and so completely enveloped in an enormous apron that one saw only the ends of his trousers and his head—the strangest ever seen, for there was not a hair upon it; he was bald as an egg, and his head was the shape of an egg, and the colour of an Easter egg, a pretty pink all over. His eyes, like a ferret's, were small and restless and watery; a long nose, a straight drooping chin, and a thick provincial accent that amused me.

'Have you no other rooms?'

'Nous n'avons que cela.'

I quote his words in the language in which they were spoken, for I remember how brutal they seemed to us. *Nous n'avons que cela* will always be to me as pregnant with meaning as the famous *to be or not to be.* For it really amounted to that. I can see Doris standing by me, charming, graceful as a little Tanagra statuette, seemingly not aware of the degradation that the possession of her

love would mean in such a room as that which we stood in; and I think I can honestly say that I wished we had never come to Orelay, that we had gone straight on to Paris, or it were better even to sacrifice her love than that it should be degraded by vulgar circumstances; and without fear of exaggeration I may say that my honeymoon had come to seem to me what the black mass must seem to the devout Christian—an abominable blasphemy.

'The rooms will look better,' Doris said, 'when fires have been lighted, and when our bags are unpacked. A skirt thrown over the arm of a chair furnishes a room.'

Taking her hands in mine I kissed them, and was almost consoled; but at that moment my eyes fell upon the beds, and I said:—

'Those beds! Oh, Doris, those beds! yours is no better than mine.'

Women are always satisfied, or they are kind, or they are wise, and accept the inevitable without a murmur.

'Dearest, ask the waiter to bring us some hot water.'

I did so, and while he was away I paced the room, unable to think of anything but the high bed; it was impossible to put out of my sight the ridiculous spectacle of a couple in a nightgown and pyjama-suit climbing into it. The thought of Doris and myself lying under that eider-down, facing the tall window, with nothing to shut out the light but the vulgar lace curtains, pursued me, and I paced the room till the pink waiter returned with two jugs; and then, feeling very miserable, I began to unpack my bag, without getting further than the removal of the brushes and comb; Doris unpacked a few things, and she washed her hands, and I thought I might wash mine; but before I had finished washing them I left the dreadful basin, and going to Doris with dripping hands I said:—

'There is very little difference in the rooms. Perhaps you would like to sleep in mine?'

'I can see no difference. I think I'll remain where I am.'

Which room she slept in may seem insignificant to the reader, but this is not so, for had we changed rooms this story would never have been written. I can see myself even now walking to and fro like a caged animal vainly seeking for a way of escape. My adventure reminds me very much of the beginning of a romantic novel in which the wind blows aside a tapestry, discovering a secret door. The room lacked tapestry, but my eyes fell suddenly on a crumpling in the wall-paper. 'A door,' said I, unlatched it, and pushing through it I descended two steps, and lo! found myself in the room of my heart's desire: a large, richly-coloured saloon with red silk damask curtains hanging from carved cornices, and falling into such folds that the proportions of the windows and the walls were enhanced. The walls were stretched with silk of a fine romantic design, the dominant note of which was red, to match the curtains. A curious old clock on the marble chimney-piece, amid branching candelabra, struck the hour, and I said, 'That clock reminded lovers of the wasting hours many times—no one knows how many, and very soon it will perform the same sad office for us. A beautiful room in its proportions and its colour,' I continued, and seeing another door ajar I went through it, to discover a bedroom likewise in red, with two beds facing each other. The beds were high, it is true, and a phrase from a letter I had written to Doris, "aggressively virtuous," rose up in my mind as I looked upon them. But the curtains hung well from *les ciels de lit* (one cannot say *cieux de lit*, I suppose)—the English word is, I think, tester. 'This room is far from the bedroom of my dreams,' I muttered, 'but *à la*

rigueur ça peut marcher.' And pursuing my quest a little further, I came upon a spacious bedroom with two windows looking out on the courtyard—a room which would have satisfied the most imaginative lover, a room worthy of the adorable Doris. A great bed, wide and low, 'like a battlefield, as our bed should be,' I said, for the lines of the old poet were running in my head:—

> Madame, shall we undress you for the fight?
> The wars are naked that you make to-night.

And, looking upon it, I stood there like one transfigured, filled with a great joy; for the curtains, hanging from a graceful tester like a crown, would have satisfied the painter Boucher. He rarely painted bedrooms. I do not remember any at this moment; but I remember many by Fragonard, and Fragonard would have said: 'I have no fault to find with that bed.' The carpet was not Aubusson, but it was nevertheless a finely-designed carpet, and its colour was harmonious; the sofa was shapely enough, and the Louis XVI. armchairs were filled with deep cushions. I turned to the toilet-table, fearing it might prove an incongruity, but it was in perfect keeping with the room, and I began at once to look forward to seeing it laid out with all the manifold ivories and silver of Doris's dressing-case.

Imagine my flight, dear reader, if you can, back to Doris, whom I had left trying to make the best of that miserable square room, more like a prison cell than a bedroom.

'What is the matter, dearest?' she asked.

But without answering her I said, 'Give me your hand,' and led her, as a prince leads his betrothed in a fairy tale, through the richly-coloured saloon, lingering a moment for her to admire it, and then I took her through my room, the double-bedded room, saying, 'All

this is nothing; wait till you see your room.' And Doris paused, overcome by the beauty of the bed, of the curtains falling from the tester gracefully as laburnum or acacia branches in June.

'The rooms are beautiful, but a little cheerless.'

'Doris, Doris, you don't deserve to lie there! The windows, of course, must be opened, fresh air must be let in, and fires must be lighted. But think of you and me sitting here side by side talking before our bed-time.' And fires were lighted quickly by servants who came in bearing candelabra in their hands, and among them, and with Doris by my side, I imagined myself a prince, and rightly, for who is a prince but he who possesses the most desirable thing in the world in circumstances the most delectable? And what circumstance is more delightful than sitting in a great shadowy bedroom, watching the logs burning, shedding their grateful heat through the room, for the logs that were brought to us, as we soon discovered, were not the soft wood grown for consumption in Parisian hotels; the logs that warmed our toes in Orelay were dense and hard as iron, and burned like coal, only more flagrantly, and very soon the bareness of the room disappeared. A petticoat thrown over a chair, as Doris said, gives an inhabited look to a room at once; and the contents of her dressing-case, as I anticipated, took the room back to one hundred years ago, when some great lady sat there in a flowered silk gown before one of those inlaid dressing-tables, filled with pigments and powders and glasses.

There was one of those tables in the room, and I drew it from the corner, raised its lid, the lid with the looking-glass in it, for I liked to furnish it with a multitude of things for bodily use—the various sponges: the flat sponge for the face, the round sponge for the body, and the many little sponges; all the scissors, and the powder

for the nails, phials of scent, the soft silks, the lace scarves, the long silk night-gown, soon to droop over her shoulders. My description by no means exhausts the many things she produced from her dressing-case and bags, nor would the most complete catalogue convey an impression of Doris's cleanliness of her little body! One would have to see her arranging her things, with her long curved hands and almond nails carefully cut—they were her immediate care, and many powders and ointments and polishers were called into requisition. Some reader will cry that all this is most unimportant, but he is either hypocritical or stupid, for it is only with scent and silk and artifices that we raise love from an instinct to a passion.

Not only must a mistress be careful of herself, and spend many hours upon herself when her maid is not with her, but a man must consider in what apparel he approaches his mistress. There are still, I believe, some married men in our far northern islands who go into their wives' bedrooms wearing flannel or jaeger night-shirts. Fie upon such things! I have always pitied women a little, for they are obliged to take us—well, as a woman once said to me, and she was an artist in these matters, 'We have to take you as you are.'

This was five-and-twenty years ago, before pyjamas were invented—benedictive garments that redeem us from the shame of the nightshirt. Pyjamas are without doubt the great redemption; and if the quality of the silk and its colour be carefully chosen, and the silk cords and the tassels be tied to advantage, and a pocket be worn at the breast, a man (garbed by Hope Brothers, Regent Street) may enter a lady's room without loss of dignity. I had overlooked my clothes with great care before leaving London, seeing that many different suits, the most finely-coloured, were among my luggage;

and many an evening at Plessy I had looked at these, sighing, thinking that I might never wear them for Doris's pleasure and admiration, and now in Orelay my thoughts went back to my pyjamas. I had told the *valet de chambre* at Plessy, an excellent fellow, but somewhat stupid, who looked after me at my hotel, which suits he was to put into my suit-case; and remembering my very words well, I jumped to my feet so suddenly that Doris asked me what was the matter, why I was going.

'I'm only going to unpack, dear.'

In a few minutes I returned—how well do I remember that moment!—looking, she said, like one to whom a catastrophe had happened. Perhaps the word catastrophe will seem an exaggeration, though a greater misfortune could hardly have fallen upon a lover, for not only did the *valet de chambre* forget to put in the special pyjamas that I had indicated—he had put no pyjamas in at all.

'How am I to go into your room to-night, dear?'

Doris did not answer, and I sat like one overwhelmed, not able yet to fully realise the misfortune that had befallen us. At last, getting up, I walked across the room, and stopping suddenly I said, 'I believe that Schopenhauer was right, Doris, for surely the sum of our pains exceeds the sum of our pleasures. The hawk that eats the sparrow does not get as much pleasure out of his meal as the sparrow gets pain from being devoured. That dear little body,' I said, taking her in my arms, 'that delicious face—who appreciates it more than I do?—but when I think of the week of agony that I suffered at Plessy, the torment that I endured in the railway train, the blank disappointment that fell upon me when we were shown into those bedrooms—never shall I forget the disappointment, for I foresaw it all as it would have been if we had remained there——'

'But, dearest, we didn't remain there.'

'An accident discovered these rooms, and another accident has rendered these rooms almost accursed.'

'It's very unlucky,' Doris said, 'that the *valet de chambre* overlooked the pyjamas. Have you searched well in your suit-case?'

'Yes, I have turned it all out. There are no pyjamas. The only chance is that I might buy some in Orelay. The shops may not be closed yet, if we went out at once.'

'I'm afraid,' Doris answered, 'that you'll not find any pyjamas in Orelay.'

'Not like those that I told the idiot to put into my dressing-case; I know that well enough. You think the rough things that the shops supply here would be worse than none? Perhaps.'

We had ordered dinner for half-past seven, and Doris said as we walked through the hall, 'You'd better leave word that we shall not be back till eight o'clock.'

As we went through the narrow dark streets of Orelay, through which the cold night wind was blowing, I observed that Doris was clad too lightly; she had only the summer things that she wore at Plessy, and I begged of her to draw her cloak tightly round her.

'Here is a shop,' I said, and in we went. 'Madame, have you got any pyjamas?'

'No, we have no pyjamas. We don't keep them,' answered a matronly woman, and Doris said as we hurried away to another shop that she looked as if we had asked for something indecent. The same answer befell us shop after shop, down the long street, each one advising us to try the next, till at last there were no more to try.

'There is only one place,' said a pretty young woman who seemed to have divined our misfortune and to sympathise with us, 'where you can get pyjamas in

Orelay. Turn down the street by the church and follow it till you come to the Place [I've forgotten the name], and at the corner you will see a shop *Les Élégants;* if they have no pyjamas there you had better buy a night-shirt, sir.'

'Thank you, thank you.' Doris and I hurried away in quest of *Les Élégants;* we walked half a mile, stopping now and then at small shops. 'Have you got pyjamas?' 'No, we don't keep them, only nightshirts.' At last appeared the welcome letters *Les Élégants,* and we addressed ourselves to the young man in attendance, who told us that the last he had he returned to the makers, there being no demand for pyjamas in Orelay.

'Alas! Doris, we have fallen upon a moral town!—high beds and nightshirts.'

'But, sir, may I not offer you a silk nightshirt? We have some very pretty ones.'

I looked at Doris.

'We might see them,' she said; 'this is a pretty stripe,' and she examined the quality carefully with her long fingers, which I have already mentioned were slender and curved, and while she was examining the nightshirts I tried to discover from the shopman how it was there was no demand for pyjamas. Were there no young men in Orelay who declined to enter a lady's room in a night-shirt? The shopman looked at me doubtfully, and answered that no doubt there were some, but *les dandies* sent to Paris for their underwear.

'I think, dear, that this nightshirt——'

'Yes, yes, Doris, better, a little better than nothing.'

As we raced home through the ill-paved streets of Orelay, the houses black about us, falling into rapid perspectives against the sky, the dome of the cathedral showing now and again, Doris said, 'I am sure that pyjamas are looked upon as mortal sins in Orelay, and

silk nightshirts with pink stripes, price ten francs, as venial, perhaps; meriting, however, a long term in purgatory.'

'No doubt you are right,' and we ran on again, tossing ideas from one to the other. I remember telling Doris that everything unusual is considered immoral—nor should we be surprised that this is so, the original meaning of the word being unusual. The moralists are better grammarians than they think, for it would be correct to say that broken weather is immoral weather, though I doubt if one would be understood. At that moment the sight of a *marchand d'antiquité* interrupted our conversation, and going into the shop we spent some time hunting for a present for Doris. When we left the shop the ideas we had abandoned so hurriedly returned to us, and we remembered how in Western Europe it is considered moral for a woman to exhibit her bosom in the evening—the reason why women wear low dresses is apparent enough ('Doris, dear, aren't we funny creatures?')—whereas in the East a woman would be considered a very frivolous person if she uncovered her bosom in the daytime, to say nothing of the evening; but she may uncover her feet, for it is customary to do so. 'So you see, Doris, dear, that grammar is an abiding rock standing in the midst of ethical quicksands.'

'Do you think, then,' said Doris, 'that what we have agreed to look upon as a sin to-day was once regarded as meritorious?'

'Yes; and will again.

'Do you know,' she said suddenly, 'that I have often heard mother tell that drawers were not worn by women in England until they were brought into fashion by the Empress Eugénie.'

'Who,' cried I, 'invented the crinoline, which could not be worn without long drawers reaching to the ankle in

our gusty climate. And this gave the moralist and the theologian their chance of discussing a congenial subject. And how they must have enjoyed the discussion! Prurient folk,' I muttered, and my anger rising rapidly, I did not regain my temper till we reached the hotel.

'I am longing,' said Doris, 'to see that beautiful red drawing-room with all the candelabra lighted and half a dozen logs blazing on the hearth. It is extraordinary how cold it is in the street.'

To procure an impartial mind, bodily ease is necessary, and we sat on either side of a splendid fire warming our toes; and when completely thawed I was prone to admit that the hostility which the Empress's drawers had met with in England was not so superficial as it seemed at first sight, for the English people are essentially Christian, and in declaring that drawers were immoral, public feeling was only expressing—crudely if you will, but still expressing—the belief that lies at the root of all Christianity: that refinement is in itself sinful, and all that conduces to refinement is dangerous. At the bottom of his heart every Christian feels, though he may not care to admit it in these modern days, that every attempt to make love a beautiful and pleasurable thing is a return to paganism. In the eyes of the moralist and theologian how much superior to either is the astrologer. The only excuse for man's love of woman is that without it the world would come to an end. But why they should consider the end of the world a misfortune, I have never been able to find out, for if their creed be a true one, the principal use of this world is to supply hell with fuel. Very few indeed may hope to get to heaven.

'But France is not a Christian country, and yet, you see, the high bed has not become extinct,' said Doris.

'Ideas die slowly. Pyjamas are still regarded as a capital luxury! The nightcap has disappeared, it is true,

even in Orelay, but the nightshirt remains, alas! alas and I opened my parcel and produced the garment. 'Love is dressed ridiculously, made to look like a zany. I would that I had bought a nightcap; it's a pity to wear the nightshirt without the cap.'

'I am thankful you didn't,' Doris murmured under her breath.

'I don't know; it is better to look awful than to look ugly.'

'You would look awful, dear.'

'Doris, I should like to see you in a nightcap and one of those long frilled nightgowns of our grandmothers that one sees in pictures.'

'I wonder how I should look,' Doris answered, with that gravity which always comes into a woman's face when the talk turns on what she is to wear.

'Of what are you thinking, dear?' she asked suddenly.

'Only of the nightcap, but it is late; I suppose we should find the shops closed; moreover, we might not be able to get one in Orelay. Besides, Doris, the nightcap would lead to a return to the old custom of sleeping together. When the nightcap was in vogue love was cribbed, cabined, and confined, if I may quote Shakespeare, within the limits of a four-post bed, and the time for love was regulated as near to midnight as may be; and after the love-feast the married couple were expected to turn round to sleep, perchance to pray.'

Doris's opinion on this point, whether lovers should sleep together, was not easily ascertained. Women are conservative, and old customs appeal to them.

'I have never slept with any one in my life; *de cela au moins je suis vierge.*'

'Now you are quoting from *Les Confessions d'un Jeune Anglais.*'

'One never changes. Did I say that? I had forgotten. But since writing that confession I have been informed by

the erudite in love that my abstinence has, no doubt, lost me a great deal; all my friends tell me so. I have been told, and by one who should know, that he who has not waked up in the morning with his beloved, to see the sunlight in the window, and to hear the birds in the vine, does not know the rapture and the enchantment of lovers' intimacy.'

As I confided my friend's opinion to Doris the firelight played over her face and hair, and I perceived for the first time what it must be to see the sleeping face beside me, lying in the disordered gold of long thick hair. And Doris, who was doubtless feeling a little tired, sat looking into the fire. Her attitude encouraged reverie; dream linked into dream, till at last the chain of dreams was broken by the entrance of the pink waiter bringing in our dinner. In the afternoon I had called him an imbecile, which made him very angry, and he had explained that he was not an imbecile, but if I hurried him he lost his head altogether. Of course one is sorry for speaking rudely to a waiter; it is a shocking thing to do, and nothing but the appearance of the bedroom we were shown into would excuse me. His garrulousness, which was an irritation in the afternoon, was an amusement as he laid the cloth and told me the bill of fare; moreover, I had to consult him about the wine, and I liked to hear him telling me, in his strong Southern accent, of a certain wine of the country, as good as Pommard and as strong, and which would be known all over the world, only it did not bear transportation. Remembering how tired we were, and the verse:—

Quand on boit du Pommard, on devient bon, on aime,
On devient aussi bon que le Pommard lui-même,

came to my tongue, and we drank, hoping that the wine would awaken us. But the effect of that strong Southern wine seemed to be more lethargic than exhilarating,

and when dinner was over and we had returned to our seats by the fireside we were too weary to talk, and too nervous.

'The hour has come, Doris,' I said, with a choking sensation in my throat, and I seemed to be trembling in my very entrails; she, too, seemed nervous. 'It is time to go to our room. We are both tired. Why should we sit up any longer?'

I have told how I looked forward to the intimacy of the fire in Doris's bedroom, to sitting by it with her, seeing her undo her hair, unloose her bodice, seeing her kick her velvet slippers aside, draw her silk stockings off her legs white as milk, and twist herself into the great bed wide as a battlefield. It is rarely that things fall out exactly as we imagine them, but in this instance they did. I have told of the disappointment we experienced on seeing the rooms that were offered to us, and then of the loss of my pyjamas; but the fears of the lover were not ended yet. The great fear lest the eagerness of his desire should undermine his bodily strength was upon me; and had not Doris proved all that I had imagined her to be, my fate might have been a sad one. She was not a Tanagra figure, a sketch in clay, but a finished marble; she was *une fille en marbre*, but not at all *une fille de marbre;* and, all preliminaries over, I went in unto her, Saved! Saved! by her beauty from the misfortune dreaded by all lovers.

It is with regret that I cannot tell her beauty in every intimate detail, for what is so well worth telling as beauty?—the beauty of a woman's arms when she opens them to you, the most beautiful movement in the world but one, and the pretty movement of the hips when she rolls herself over like a puss cat—a lovely thing to see and to brood upon. Women are aware of their beauty, just as cats are; and men are aware of their

ugliness. Mine was a sore trouble to me in that fine bed with Doris beside me. 'It is beauty and the beast,' I said. But she didn't seem to see me as I saw myself; and, like Pilate, I asked myself, 'What is truth?' but will not intrude my meditation on the reader, who will be more interested to hear that one remembers everything better than the moment of ecstasy—the colour of the rooms, their shapes, the furniture, all is seen by me to-day as truly as if the reality were before me; the very wood we burned in the great fireplace, the shape of one log, how it fell into ashes at one end, leaving a great knotted stump at the other, the moving of the candles into shadowy places so that the light should not fall upon our eyes—all these details are remembered, only the moment of ecstasy is forgotten. It is a pity that this is so. But I can recall the moment when I stood at the foot of the bed bidding her good-night, for the moment comes when all lovers must part, unless indeed they are married folk "who occupy the same room." The occupation of the same room, one of the most important questions in love's economy, was being treated when the pink waiter brought in our dinner; and the reader will remember that I was telling Doris how those learned in love had told me that he who has not waked up in the morning with his beloved, seeing the sunlight in the window, hearing the birds in the vine, does not know the rapture of love, the enchantment of its intimacy. The sympathetic reader will not have forgotten this avowal, and his instinct leaping forward, he will have seen me standing triumphant on the summit of all earthly love; therefore the admission that, feeling myself falling asleep, I bade Doris good-night at the foot of the bed, will cast him into the slough of despond, from which my subsequent narrative, however lively, may fail to lift him. But though I did not realise the sacred moment at Orelay which, with the music of harps,

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Wagner depicts when Siegfried's kiss awakes Brunnhilde —I learned, nevertheless, at Orelay that my friend who said I was but a novice, a mere acolyte in Love's service, was not wholly wrong in his criticism of my life, for waking suddenly after sleeping for some hours, I heard Doris trying the handle of my door. I called to ask her if she were seeking anything. She said there was no clock in her room, but there was one on my chimney-piece, and it seemed so kind of her to come to my room that I could not keep myself from asking her to come into my bed, and finding her nothing loth I took her in my arms, telling her that I had never seen a woman so early in the morning before. This confession pleased her, for she did not wish our love to be sullied with memories of other women; and that morning she shed such delight about me that I sought her the following morning in her room, and that visit, too, is remembered, though it is less distinct in my mind than her visit to my room, and when I left her to dress myself she came running in to tell me something she had forgotten to tell me, and our intimacy was completed as she sat watching me while I shaved, laughing, for it was absurd that she should always have something to say to me. No sooner was she gone than something awoke in my mind, too, something I had unfortunately forgotten to say, and I had to lay down my razor and to beg of her to let me open the door, though she was in her bath.

I know a statue of a woman leaning forward wiping her thighs, and that was the movement I discovered Doris in. The statue is not a stupid thing, but it lacks much, and all it lacks I perceived in Doris, an exquisite elegance that set me thinking of Fragonard, for Fragonard realised what a little thing a woman is compared with a man, and this was just the idea that Doris conveyed; her great mass of hair made her look smaller than she really

was, her head seemed too large for her body, yet this seeming—for it was no more than a seeming—did not detract from her beauty; she was as charming as if she had looked the regulation seven-and-a-half heads, for she was a Fragonard—an eighteenth-century bedfellow. She bade me away, saying that nobody had seen her in her bath before. She did not like it; no, she did not like it! And thinking how charming were these subterfuges, how little love would be without them, I heard her calling, saying that she would be with me in ten minutes, that I was to ring and tell the waiter to bring up our first breakfast.

The coffee and the rolls and butter were ready before Doris, and the vexation of seeing the breakfast growing cold was recompensed by the pleasure of teasing her, urging her to pass her arms into her dressing-gown, to come as she was, it did not matter what she had on underneath. The waiter did not count; he was not a man, he was a waiter, a pink creature, pinker than anything in the world, except a baby's bum, and looking very like that.

'Hasten, dear, hasten!' I cried, returning to the saloon to engage in chatter with the old provincial, my English accent contrasting strangely with his. In Plessy I had heard all accents, Swiss, German, Italian; in Plessy there was plenty of Parisian accent, and I remembered telling a Parisian flower-woman, whose husband was a Savoyard, that I declined to believe any more in the Southern accent, 'C'est une blague qu'on m'a faite'; but at Orelay I discovered the true accent, and listened to the old waiter, who was asking me for my appreciation of the wine we had drunk last night when Doris entered in a foamy white dressing-gown.

'You liked the wine, dear, didn't you? He wants to know if we'll have the same wine for twelve-o'clock breakfast.'

'Dear me, it's eleven o'clock now,' Doris answered, and she looked at the waiter.

'Monsieur and Madame will go for a little walk; perhaps you would like to breakfast at one?'

We agreed that we could not breakfast before one, and our waiter suggested that a visit to the cathedral would fill up the time pleasantly and profitably; but Doris, when she had had her coffee, wanted to sit on my knee and to talk to me; and then there was a piano, and she wanted to play me some things, or rather I wanted to hear her. But the piano was a poor one; the notes did not come back, she said, and we talked for some hours without perceiving that the time was passing. After lunch the waiter again inquired if we intended to go for a little walk; and invited us to visit the cathedral.

'It would do Monsieur and Madame good.'

'The walk or the cathedral?' we inquired, and, a little embarrassed, the old fellow began to tell us that he had not been to the cathedral for some years, but the last time he was there he had been much impressed by the darkness. It was all he could do to find his way from pillar to pillar; he had nearly fallen over the few kneeling women who crouched there listening to the clergy intoning Latin verses. According to his account, there were no windows anywhere except high up in the dome. And leaning his hands on the table, looking like all the waiters that ever existed or that will ever exist, his apron reaching nearly to his chin, upheld by strings passed over the shoulders, he told us that it was impossible to see what was happening in the chancel; but there had seemed to be a great number of clergy seated in the darkness at the back, for one heard voices behind the tall pieces of furniture singing Latin verses; terminations in "us," here and there a "noster," words ending in "e," with the organ always coming in a little late.

'My good man,' I said, 'your description leaves nothing to be desired. Why should I go to the cathedral unless to verify your impressions? I am sure the service is exactly as you describe it, and I would not for the world destroy the picture you have evoked of those forgotten priests intoning their vespers in the middle of the granite church behind a three-branched candlestick.'

The poor man left the room very much disconcerted, feeling, Doris said, as if he had lost one of the forks.

'Thank Heaven that matter is done with—a great weight is off my mind.'

'But there is the museum. You would like to see that?' said Doris, and a change came into my face.

'Well, Doris, the waiter has told us that there is a celebrated study by David in the museum, "The Nymph of Orelay."'

'But, dear one, am I not your nymph of Orelay?' and Doris slipped on her knees and put her arms about me. 'Will I not do as well as the painted creature in the museum?'

'Far better,' said I, 'far better. Now we are free, Doris, freed from the cathedral and the museum, and all to-morrow belongs to us, and we may pass it in bed if we like.'

'And so we will,' said Doris meditatively; and I looked forward to an interesting and instructive day in Doris's bed, to gathering many precious memories of her beauty, thereby combining æsthetics with hygienics, for neither caught a cold in Orelay, a thing easy to do when a mistral is blowing. It was not till the following evening that we remembered our bags, 'Which need packing,' I said. 'Time is always on the wing, Doris. To-morrow morning we leave Orelay.'

'And leaving by train,' Doris said regretfully. 'Would we were going away in a carriage!'

'There is no reason why we should not drive,' and I stopped packing my bag, and stood looking at her with a half-folded nightshirt in my hands.

'Ah, that nightshirt!' and she laughed.

'What shall I do with it?'

'You wouldn't part with it? You'll keep it in remembrance of Orelay.'

'Yes; I would not have it fall on other backs,' and looking at the cream silk, faintly striped with pink, it seemed to me that it was not so ugly a garment after all. 'It will always remind me of these rooms, where we shall never be again. Doris, is it not sad? We have spent three such days here and three such nights that one does not know which was the pleasantest. Dear God, how thankful we ought to be that Thou didst differentiate between man and woman! What a dismal place the world would have been without sex—all its romance and folly.'

'I wonder if we should have stayed three days if we had not discovered these rooms? Dear one, I think I should not have meant so much to you in those humbler rooms: you attach much importance to these cornices and hangings.'

'I should have loved you always, Doris, but I think I can love you better here,' and with our bags in our hands we wandered from the bedroom into the drawing-room and stood admiring its bygone splendour. 'Doris, dear, you must play me "The Nut-Bush." I want to hear it on that old piano. Tinkle it, dear, tinkle it, and don't play "The Nut-Bush" too sentimentally, nor yet too gaily.'

'Which way will you have it?' she said; '"as a true love's truth or a light love's art?"'

'I would have it dainty and fantastic, as Schumann wrote it.'

'With a hint of loneliness in it?'

'That is it,' I cried, 'that is the right time to play it in, without stress on either side. . . . No, you mustn't leave the piano, Doris. Sing me some songs. Go on singing Schumann or Schubert. They were the singing-birds of the 'fifties. Sing "The Lotus-flower" or "Moonlight." I love their romantic sentimentalities: orange gardens, south winds, a lake with a pinnace upon it.'

'With a nightingale singing in a dark wood by a lonely shore,' she replied. 'That is how they felt, how they dreamed.'

And resigning herself to my humour she sang song after song, till at last, awaking from a long reverie of music and old association of memories, I said, 'Play me a waltz, Doris; I would hear an old-time waltz played in this room; its romantic flourishes will evoke the departed spirits,' and very soon, sitting in my chair with half-closed eyes, it seemed to me that I saw crinolines faintly gliding over the floor, and white-stockinged feet, sloping shoulders and glistening necks with chignons—swan-like women, and long-whiskered cavaliers wearing peg-top trousers and braided coats dancing or talking with them. . . . The music suddenly stopped, and Doris said:—

'If we are to catch our train we must go on with our packing.'

'You mustn't talk to me of trains,' and overcome with a Schumann-like longing and melancholy I took her in my arms. No Chelsea or Dresden figure was ever more dainty, gayer or brighter. She was Schumann and Dresden, but a Dresden of an earlier period than Schumann; but why compare her to anything? She was Doris, the very embodiment of her name.

'Ah, Doris, why are we leaving here? Why can't we remain here for ever?'

'Why, indeed,' she said; 'I feel the charm of those old stately rooms as much as you do. Why, indeed,

are we leaving? But, dearest, we have missed the train.'

The pink waiter came up, I promised to hasten, but my love of Doris delayed us unduly, and we arrived at the station only to hear that the train had gone away some ten minutes before. The train that left was the only good train in the day, and missing it had given us another twenty-four hours in Orelay; but Doris was superstitious. 'Our three days are done,' she said; 'if we don't go to-day we shall go to-morrow, and to go on the fourth day would be unlucky. And what shall we do meanwhile? The spell is broken. We have left our hotel and must take a carriage, and drive to the next station. The sun is shining, and the country is beautiful,' she pleaded, 'we saw it from the railway, a strange red country, grey with olives, olive orchards extending to the very foot of the mountains, and mingling with the pine-trees descending the slopes.'

'The slopes!' I said, 'the precipitous sides of that high rock! Shall I ever forget it?—beginning like the tail of a lion and rising up to the sky, towering above the level landscape like a sphinx.'

'The drive would be delightful!'

'It would be a continuation of the romance of the old Empire drawing-room. A post-chaise! If we could discover one.'

Sometimes Nature seems to conspire to carry out an idea, and though no veritable post-chaise of old time was discovered in the coach-house behind the courtyard in which the ilex-trees flourished, it was our lot to catch sight of a carriage some twenty-five or thirty years old, a cumbersome old thing, hung upon C-springs, of the security of which the coachman seemed doubtful. He spoke disparagingly, telling us that the proprietor had been trying to sell it, but no one would buy it, so heavy

was it on the horses' hocks, and so out of fashion that he didn't care to drive it. The coachman's notions of beauty did not concern us, but Doris dreaded lest one of the wheels should come off. On examination it was found to be roadworthy, and I said to Doris as I helped her into it:—

'If it be no post-chaise, at all events ladies wearing crinolines have sat inside it, that is certain, and gentlemen wearing peg-top trousers with braid upon them. Good God, Doris, if you were to wear a crinoline I should love you beyond hope of repentance. When I was a boy every one wore white stockings; I had only heard of black ones, and I always hoped to meet a lady wearing black stockings, and now my hope is to meet one wearing white.'

'We might have searched the town for a crinoline and a pair of white stockings.'

'Yes, and I might have discovered a black silk stock. I wonder how I should have looked in it. Doris,' I said, 'we have missed the best part of our adventure. We forgot to dress the part we are playing—the lovers of Orelay, think of it.'

Who will disagree with me when I say that no adventure is complete unless it necessitates an amount of ceremonial, the wearing of wigs, high bodices, stockings and breeches? Every one likes to disguise himself, whether for a masquerade ball or to be enrolled in some strange order. Have you, reader, ever seen any one enrolled in any of these orders? If you have, you will excuse the little comedy and believe it to be natural—the comedy that Doris and I played in the old carriage driving from Orelay to Verlancourt, where we hoped to breakfast.

We could hardly speak for excitement. Doris thought of how she would look in a crinoline, and I remembered the illustrations in an early edition of Balzac of which I

am the happy possessor. How charming the men looked in the tight trousers and the black stockings of the period; and crossing my legs I followed with interest the line of my calf, for I remembered somebody doing so in *Les Illusions Perdues.* She and I lay back among our cushions, thinking which story in "The Human Comedy" was the most applicable to our case; and the only one we could think of was Madame Bargeton, a provincial blue-stocking, who left Angoulême for Paris with Lucien de Rubempré. There were no railways in the 'forties; they must have travelled in a post-chaise. Yes, I remember their journey—faintly, it is true, but I remember it. Madame Bargeton was a woman of five-and-thirty at least, Doris was much younger, and Lucien was only one-and-twenty. The names of the people of the Comedy and of the people they met at the theatre and in the Tuileries Gardens—Rastignac, Madame D'Espard, the Duchess of Chaulieu, Madame de Rochefide and Canalis—carried my mind back from crinolines and white stockings, from peg-top trousers and braided coats, to the slim trousers that were almost breeches, and to the high-breasted gowns of the Restoration. Our mothers and fathers wore the crinolines and the peg-top trousers, and our grandfathers the tight trousers and the black silk stocks, and the remembrance of these costumes filled me with a tenderness that I could not subdue. Doris's mood was the same as mine, it was plain upon her face.

We were thinking of that subject which interested men before history began—the mutability of human things, the vanishing of generations. Young as she was, Doris was thinking of death; nor is it the least extraordinary she should, for as soon as any one has reached the age of reflection the thought of death may come upon him at any moment, though he be in the middle of a ballroom, or lying in the arms of his mistress. If the scene be a

ballroom he has only to look outside, and the night will remind him that in a few years he will enter the eternal night; or if the scene be a bedroom, the breast of his mistress may perchance remind him of another whose breast was equally beautiful and who is now amid the earth; lesser things will suffice to recall his thoughts from life to death—a rose-petal falling on a marble table, a dead bird in the path as he walks in his garden. And after the thought of death the most familiar thought is the decay of the bodily vesture. The first grey hair may seem to us an amusing accident, but very few years will pass before another and yet another appear, and if these do not succeed in reminding us that decay has begun, a black speck on a tooth cannot fail to do so; and when we go to the dentist to have it stopped, we have begun to repair artificially the falling structure. The activity of youth soon passes, and its slenderness. I remember still the shock I felt on hearing an athlete say that he could no longer run races of a hundred yards; he was half a second or a quarter of a second slower than he was last year. I looked at him, saying, 'But you are only one-and-twenty,' and he answered, 'Yes, that is it.' A football player, I believe, is out of date at eight-and-twenty. Out of date! What a pathos there is in the words—out of date! *Suranné*, as the French say. How are we to render it in English? By the beautiful but artificial word "Yester-year"? Yester-year, perhaps, for a sorrow clings about it; it conveys a sense of autumn, of "the long decline of roses." There is something ghostlike in the out-of-date. The landscape about Plessy transported us back into antiquity, making us dream of nymphs and dryads, but the gilt cornices and damask hangings and the salon at Orelay set us dreaming of a generation ago, of the youth of our parents. Ancient conveys no personal meaning, but the out-of-date transports us, as it were, to the stern of

the vessel, throws us into a mournful attitude; we lean our heads upon our hands and, looking back, we see the white wake of the vessel, with shores sinking in the horizon and the crests of the mountains passing away into the clouds.

And while musing on these abstract questions raised by my remark that we had not managed our adventure properly, since we had forgotten to provide ourselves with proper costumes, the present suddenly thrust itself upon me. 'Good God,' I said to Doris, 'let us look back, for we shall never see Orelay again!' and she from one window, and I from the other, saw the spires of Orelay for the last time. We could not tear ourselves away, but fortunately the road turned; Orelay was blotted out from our sight for ever, and we sank back to remember that a certain portion of our lives was over and done, a beautiful part of our lives had been thrown into the void, into the great rubble-heap of emotions that had been lived through, that are no more.

'Of what are you thinking, dear? You have been far away. This is the first time we have been separated, and we are not yet five miles from Orelay.'

'Five miles! Ah, if it were only five!'

We did not speak for a long time, and watching the midday sun, I thought that peradventure it was not further from us than yesterday. Were I to say so to Doris she would answer, 'It will be the same in Paris,' but if she did it would be the first falsehood she had told me, for we both knew that things are never the same—things change, for better or worse, but they change.

This last sentence seems to me somewhat trite, and if I were to continue this story any further, my pen would run into many other superficial and facile observations, for my mind is no longer engrossed with the story. I have it in mind no longer, and sit asking myself whether we drove

into Verlancourt and breakfasted there or drove all the way to Paris with relays of horses. A moment of reflection is enough: we breakfasted at Verlancourt, and when we asked the coachman after breakfast if he would care to go on to Paris with us, he raised his eyes, 'The carriage is a very old one, Monsieur——' Doris and I laughed, for, truth to tell, we were so abominably shaken that we were glad to exchange the picturesque old coach of our fathers' generation for the train. The Lovers of Orelay

These stories are memories, not inventions, and an account of the days I spent in Paris would interest nobody; all the details are forgotten, and invention and remembrance do not agree any better than the goat and the cabbage. So, omitting all that does not interest me—and if it does not interest me how can it interest the reader?—I will tell merely that my adventure with Doris was barren of scandal or unpleasant consequences. Her mother, a dear unsuspicious woman—whether her credulity was the depth of folly or the depth of wisdom, I know not; there are many such mothers, my blessing be upon them!—took charge of her daughter, and Doris and her mother returned to England. I am afraid that when I confess that I did not speak to Doris of marriage I shall forfeit the good opinion of my reader, who will, of course, think that a love-story with such an agreeable creature as Doris merited a lifetime of devotion; but I pray the reader to discover an excuse for me in the fact that Doris told me when we were in Plessy that there was no question of her marrying any one but Albert, reminding me that she had sacrificed the great love of her life in order that she might remain constant to Albert. Is it to be expected, then, that having done that, she would put Albert aside and throw her lot in with mine? She might have done this; men and women act inconsequently. Having on one occasion refused to drop the mutton-chop

for the shadow, on the next occasion they would drop it for the shadow of the shadow; but Doris was made of sterner stuff, and some months afterwards she wrote me a steady sensible little letter, telling me that she was going to be married, and that it seemed to her quite natural that she should marry Albert. Years have passed away, and nothing has happened to lead me to believe that she has not proved a true and loving wife. Albert has always told me that he found all the qualities in her which he had foreseen from the first time he looked upon her pretty, sparkling face. Frown not, reader, accuse me not of superficial cynicism! Albert is part of the world's inheritance. You may be Albert yourself, every one has been or will be Albert; Albert is in us all, just as I am in you all. Doris, too, is in you, dear lady, who sit reading my book—Doris my three-days mistress at Orelay, and Doris the faithful spouse of Albert for twenty years in a lonely London suburb.

Study and boudoir would like to know if Doris had any children. About two years afterwards I heard that she was "expecting." The word came up spontaneously in my mind, perhaps because I had written it in the beginning of the story. Reader, you will remember in *Massimilla Doni* how Balzac, when he came to the last pages, declares that he dare not tell the end of the adventure; one word, he says, will be enough for the worshippers of the ideal—Massimilla Doni was "expecting." I have not read the story for many years, but it lives in me, and when I began to write this story I turned to the last paragraph to find myself soon baffled by certain grammatical obscurities, or what seemed to me such. I seemed to understand and to admire it all till I came to the line that 'les peuplades de cent cathédrales gothiques (which might be rendered as the figured company of a hundred Gothic cathedrals), tout le peuple des figures qui

brisent leur forme pour venir à vous, artistes compréhensifs, toutes ces angéliques filles incorporelles accoururent autour du lit de Massimilla, et y pleurèrent!' The riddle is why statues should break their forms (*forme*, I suppose, should be translated *mould*)—break their moulds—the expression seems very inadequate—break their moulds "in order to go to you, great imaginative artists." How could they break their moulds or their forms to go to the imaginative artists, the mould or the form being the gift of the imaginative artists? I should have understood Balzac better if he had said that the statues escape from their niches, and the Madonnas and the angels from their frames, to gather round the bed of Massimilla to weep. Balzac's idea seems to have got a little tangled, or maybe I am stupid to-day. However, here is the passage:— The Lovers of Orelay

'Les péris, les ondines, les fées, les sylphides du vieux temps, les muses de la Grèce, les vierges de marbre de la Certosa di Pavia, le Jour et la Nuit de Michel Ange, les petits anges que Bellini le premier mit au bas des tableaux d'église, et que Raphael a faits si divinement au bas de la vierge au donataire, et de la madone qui gèle à Dresde, les délicieuses filles d'Orcagna, dans l'église de San-Michele à Florence, les chœurs célestes du tombeau de Saint Sébald à Nuremberg, quelques vierges du Duomo de Milan, les peuplades de cent cathédrales gothiques, tout le peuple des figures qui brisent leur forme pour venir à vous, artistes compréhensifs, toutes ces angéliques filles incorporelles accoururent autour du lit de Massimilla, et y pleurèrent.'

X

THERE WAS a time when my dream was not literature, but painting; and I remember an American giving me a commission to make a small copy In the Luxembourg Gardens

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of Ingres' "Perseus and Andromeda," and myself sitting on a high stool in the Luxembourg, trying to catch the terror of the head thrown back, of the arms widespread, chained to the rock, and the beauty of the foot, advanced to the edge of the wave. The poor thing is in some Western state, maybe where people are ignorant enough to accept it as a sketch for the original picture. But why am I thinking of it at all? Only for that a more interesting memory hangs upon it.

After working all one morning, I left the museum feeling half satisfied with my drawing, but dreading the winged monster that awaited me after lunch. In those days I was poor, though rich for the Quarter, and moved in a society of art students who used to meet for breakfast in a queer little café, the meal costing about a shilling. On my return from this café soon after twelve—I breakfasted early that morning—I remember how, overcome by a sudden idleness, I loitered in the Gardens to watch the birds and the sunlight, and they seemed to understand each other so well that I threw myself on a bench and began to wonder if there was anything better in the world worth doing than to sit in an alley of clipped limes smoking, thinking of Paris and of myself.

Every one, or nearly every one, except perhaps the upper classes, whose ideas of Paris are the principal boulevards—the Rue de Rivoli, the Rue de la Paix—knows the Luxembourg Gardens; and watching April at play and listening to water trickling from a vase that a great stone Neptune held in his arms at the end of the alley, my thoughts turned on a certain palace, now a museum, rarely visited, whither I had gone a week ago with Mildred, but finding that she had never heard of Madame de Sévigné, and did not care whether she had lived in this palace or another, I spoke to her of the Place des Vosges, telling that it had once been the

habitation of the old French nobility. As I spoke, its colour rose up before my eyes, pretty tones of yellow and brown brick, with wrought-iron railings, high-pitched roofs, and tall clustered chimneys. I tried to remember if there were any colonnades; and failing, fell to thinking how the mind of a nation shapes itself like rocks, by a process of slow accumulation, and that it takes centuries to gather together an idea so characteristic as the Place des Vosges. One cannot view it—I cannot, at least—without thinking of the great monarchal centuries, and of the picturesque names which I have learned from Balzac's novels and from the history of France. In his *Étude de Catherine de Médicis*, Balzac speaks of Madame de Sauve, who must have lived in the Place des Vosges. Monsieur de Montresser might have occupied a flat on the first floor. Le Comte Bouverand de la Loyère, La Marquise d'Osmond, Le Comte de Coëtlogon, La Marquise de Villefranche, and Le Duc de Cadore, and many other names rise up in my mind, but I will not burden this story with them. I suppose the strict righteousness would be to find out who had lived in the Place des Vosges; but the search, I am afraid, would prove tedious, and perhaps not worth the trouble, for if none of the bearers of the names I have mentioned lived in the Place des Vosges, it is certain that others bearing equally noble names lived there. In the Luxembourg Gardens

'Its appearance, Mildred, is the same to-day as it was in the seventeenth century, but it is now inhabited by the small tradespeople of the Quarter; the last great person who lived there was Victor Hugo, whose house has been converted into a museum; the most interesting relics of the great poet are stored there.'

My enthusiasm enkindled in her enough interest to get her consent to come with me. She was far from being the ideal companion for such sentimental prowling as mine, but that day I could not forgo a companion. And

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after La Place des Vosges we visited Nôtre Dame together, the quays, and the old streets of L'Isle de la Cité, but Mildred lacked the historical sense, I am afraid, for as we returned in the glow of the sunset, when the monumented Seine is most beautiful, I heard her say, on awaking from what seemed a long meditation, that Paris wasn't bad for an old city; and it was the memory of this somewhat harsh remark that caused a smile to light up my lips as I looked down the dark green alley through which the April sunlight flickered.

'Absurd girl,' I said, and might have gone on thinking about her if my attention had not been distracted from her by the beauty of a line of masonry striking across the pale spring sky, tender as a faded eighteenth-century silk, only the blue was young, like a newly-opened flower. And it seeming to me that I could detect great designs for groups and single figures in the clouds going by, I compared this vapoury sculpture with the marbles on the roofs. In every angle of the palace there are statues, and in every corner of the Gardens one finds groups or single figures. Ancient Rome had sixty thousand statues —a statue for every thirty-three or thirty-four inhabitants; the proportion of statues to the people is not so great in Paris, but no city has had so many since antiquity; and that is why Paris reminds me always of the great days when this world was the only world.

In the Luxembourg Gardens we lean over the balustrades, and fall to dreaming, and dreams follow us down the long avenues of clipped limes, and around the shapely stone basins, every one monumented in some special way; in the Luxembourg Gardens we ascend stately flights of steps absorbed by the beauty about me, and we stop to ponder when we turn into the rocky hills and come upon a lonely nymph or a Neptune pouring water from a vase. Vague nostalgias and nympholipsies entice us, assail us in

the Luxembourg Gardens. At last we find ourself by Carpeau's and Frémiet's fountain, which, after long admiration, we leave to stroll to Watteau's statue, appropriately placed in a dell, among greenswards like those he loved to paint. In the Luxembourg Gardens

As I was thinking these thoughts, a pleasant voice interrupted my meditations. 'I thought I should find you in the museum painting,' it said, 'but here you are, idling in this pretty alley, and in the evening you'll tell us you've been working all day.' 'Will you come for a walk?' I replied, thinking that the Gardens might interest her, and, if they did not, the people we should meet could not fail to amuse her. We were near the time to see the man who had taught the sparrows to take bread from his lips, and it seeming to me not unlikely that Mildred would like to see the little birds hopping about his feet, I led her whither he was to be found usually. If we had luck we might meet Robin Hood, for in those days a man was wont to wander in the Gardens wearing the costume of the outlaw of Sherwood Forest, armed with a bow and arrows, with which, it was said, he had killed many sparrows. We might even meet a man in the beautiful chain armour of the thirteenth century, sitting on a bench eating his lunch, his helmet beside him—a model, no doubt, come from the studio for the lunch-hour, or maybe an *exalté* or a *fumiste;* a very innocent *fumiste,* if he were one, not one of the Quarter certainly, for even the youngest among us would know that it would take more than a suit of armour to astonish the frequenters of the Gardens.

The day I walked in the Luxembourg Gardens with Mildred we met none of the celebrities, but on coming down a flight of steps we came upon an old man and his wife, an aged couple, nearly seventy years of age,

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playing football, and the gambols of this ancient pair in the pretty April sunlight were pathetic to watch. I called Mildred's attention to them, telling her that in another part of the Gardens three old women came to dance; they, too, were celebrities in a way; but seeing that Mildred was not interested, I took the first opportunity to talk of something else. She was more interested in the life of the Quarter, in *le bal Bullier*, in stories of *grisettes* and students. At that moment she was considering a student who passed, his slim body buttoned tightly in a long frockcoat, with just the same interest as she had given to each man on board the boat a week ago, as we crossed from Folkestone to Boulogne.

I noticed her the moment I got on board; her quiet, neat clothes were unmistakably French, though not the florid French clothes Englishwomen so often buy and wear so badly. The stays she had on I thought must be one of those little ribbon stays with very few bones, and as she walked up and down she kept pressing her leather waistband still more neatly into its place, looking first over one shoulder and then over the other, reminding me of a bird, so quick were her movements, and so alert. She was not exactly pretty: her lips were thin, her mouth too tightly closed, the under-lip almost disappearing, her eyes sloped up very much at the corners, and her eyebrows were black, and they nearly met.

The next time I saw her she was beside me at dinner —we had come by chance to the same hotel, a small hotel in the Rue du Bac. Her mother was with her, an elderly sedate Englishwoman, to whom the girl talked very affectionately: 'Yes, dearest mamma'; 'No, dearest mamma.' She had a gay voice, though she never seemed to laugh or joke; but her face had a sad expression, and she sighed continually. After dinner her mother went to

the piano and played, with a great deal of accent and noise, the "Brooklyn Cake-Walk."

'We used to dance that at Nice. Oh, dear mamma, do you remember that lovely two-step?'

Her mother nodded and smiled, and began playing a Beethoven sonata, but she had not played many bars before her daughter said:—

'Now, mamma, don't play any more; come and talk to us.'

I asked her if she did not like Beethoven; she shrugged her shoulders; an expression of irritation came into her face. She either did not want to talk of Beethoven then, or she had not the wit to form any opinion about him, and, judging from her interest in the "Brooklyn Cake-Walk," I said:—

'The Cake-Walk is gayer, isn't it?'

The sarcasm seemed lost upon her; she sat looking at me with a vague expression in her eyes, and I found it hard to say whether it was indifference or stupidity.

'Mildred plays Beethoven beautifully. My daughter loves music. She plays the violin better than anybody you ever heard.'

'Then she must play very well indeed, for I've heard Sarasate and——'

'If Mildred would only practise,' and she pressed her daughter to play something for me.

'I haven't got my keys, they're upstairs; no, mamma, don't bother, I'm thinking of other things.'

Her mother went back to the piano and continued the sonata. Mildred looked at me, shrugged her shoulders, and then turned over the illustrated papers, saying they were stupid, and I learned from her that she liked the Continent much better than England. English clothes were detestable. She had met some nice Englishmen,

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but Yankees—oh, Yankees! There was one at Biarritz. Do you know Biarritz? No, nor Italy. Italians are nice, aren't they? There was one at Cannes.

'Don't think I'm not interested in hearing about pictures, because I am, but I must look at your ring, it's so like mine. This one was given to me by an Irishman, who said the curse of Moreen Dhu would be upon me if I gave it away.'

'But who is Moreen Dhu? I never heard of her.'

'You mustn't ask me; I'm not a bit an intelligent woman. People always get sick of me if they see me two days running.'

'I doubt very much if that is true. If it were, you wouldn't say it.'

'Why not? I shouldn't have thought of saying it if it wasn't true.'

Next evening at dinner I noticed that she was dressed more carefully than usual; she wore a cream-coloured gown with a cerise waistband and a cerise bow at the side of her neck. I noticed, too, that she talked less; and that after dinner she seemed anxious. I could not help thinking that she was searching for an excuse to send her mamma to bed.

'Mamma, dear, won't you play us the Impassionata?'

'But, Milly, dear, you know quite well that I can't play it.' All the same Mildred insisted, and mamma was not allowed to leave the piano till she had played her entire repertoire. She was playing something of Sidney Smith's when the door opened, and a man's face appeared for a second, and, remembering Mildred's interest in men, I said:—

'Did you see that man? What a nice, fresh-looking young man!'

She put her finger on her lip, and wrote on a piece of paper:—

'Not a word. He's my betrothed, and mother doesn't know he's here. She doesn't approve; he hasn't a bean. Thank you, mamma, thank you, you played that sonata very nicely.' In the Luxembourg Gardens

'Won't you play, my dear?'

'No, mamma, dear, I'm feeling rather tired; we've had a long day.'

And the two bade me good-night, leaving me alone in the sitting-room to finish a letter. I had just reached the signature when she came in, looking very agitated, even a little frightened.

'Isn't it awful?' she said. 'I was in the dining-room with my young man, and the waiter caught us kissing. I had to beg of him not to tell mamma. He said, "*Foi de gentilhomme,*" so I suppose it's all right.'

'Why not have your intended in here? I'm going to bed.'

'Oh no, I wouldn't think of turning you out. I'll see him in my bedroom—it's safer, and if one's conscience is clear it doesn't matter what people say.'

A few days afterwards, as I was slinging my paint-box over my shoulder, I heard some one stop in the passage, and speaking to me through the open door she said:—

'You were so awfully decent the other night when Donald looked in. I know you will think it cheek—I am the most impudent woman in the world—but do you mind my telling mamma that I am going to the Louvre with you to see the pictures? You won't give me away, will you?'

'I never split on any one.'

'My poor darling ought to go back. He's away from the office without leave, and he may get the sack; but he's going to stay another night. Can you come now? Mamma is in the salon. Come just to say a word to her and we will go out together. Donald is waiting at the corner.'

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Next morning, as I was shaving, I heard a knock at my door.

'*Entrez!*'

'Oh, I beg your pardon, but I didn't want to miss you. I'll wait for you in the salon.'

When I came downstairs she showed me a wedding ring. She had married Donald, or said she had.

'He came to my room last night. Oh, I am tired. I did have a fluffy night, and now mamma wants me to go shopping with her. Can't you stay and talk to me? and later on we might sneak out together and go somewhere. Are you painting to-day?'

'Well, no, I'm going to a museum a long way from here. I have never seen Madame de Sévigné's house.'

'Who is she?'

'The woman who wrote the famous letters.'

'I am afraid I shall only bore you, because I can't talk about books.'

'You had better come; you can't stay in this hotel by yourself all the morning.'

There was some cause why she could not go out with Donald that morning, and the reader perhaps remembers that I told her I was going to visit Madame de Sévigné's house (the reader doubtless remembers that we visited not only Madame de Sévigné's house, but also Victor Hugo's in the Place des Vosges, and perhaps her remark, as we returned home in the evening along the quays, that 'Paris wasn't bad for an old city,' has not yet slipped out of the reader's memory); but the reader has not been given any reason for the indifference with which I treated Mildred, 'treating her,' I said, when we returned to her hotel after our little outing, 'casually, like a stray dog.' As I sat smiling over our acquaintanceship, it amused me to remember that I had spoken to her of Madame de Sévigné's letters and Jean Jacques Goujon's sculpture, of

old Paris, people and things that she had never heard of and could not take an interest in. I was not certain whether she amused or bored me, and allowed two days to pass without seeking her. On the third day, as I sat in admiration in the Luxembourg Gardens, beguiled from my work by the pretty April sunlight and the birds in the pleached alley (I have spoken already of these, but they are worth a second mention), a thought of Mildred sprang into my mind, a sudden fear that I might never see her again; and it was just when I had begun to feel that I would like to walk about the Gardens with her that I heard her voice. These coincidences often occur, yet we always think them strange, almost providential. The reader knows how I rose to meet her, and how I asked her to come for a walk in the Gardens. And having now made up some arrears of story, I will tell that, at Mildred's request, we turned in the direction of the museum, for, thinking to propitiate me, Mildred suggested I should take her there; I did not like to refuse, though I feared some of the pictures and statues might distract me from the end I now had in view, which was to find out if Donald had been her first lover, and if her dear little mamma suspected anything.

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'So your mother knows nothing about your marriage?'

'Nothing. He ought to go back, but he's going to stay another night. I think I told you. Poor dear little mamma, she never suspected a bit. Donald has the room next mine. He was asleep in my bed this morning when the maid brought in the hot water. But she won't say anything.'

As we walked to the museum I caught glimpses of what Donald's past life had been, learning incidentally that his father was rich, but Donald was considered a ne'er-do-well. He had gone away to sea when he was sixteen, and had been third mate on a merchant-ship,

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a boot-black in an hotel in America, and just before he came to Paris he had fought a drunken stoker and won a purse of five pounds.

She asked me which were the best pictures, but could not keep her attention fixed, and her attempts to remember the names of the painters were pathetic. 'Ingres, did you say? I must try to remember. Puvis de Chavannes? What a curious name! but I do like his picture. He has given that man Donald's shoulders,' she said, laying her hand on my arm, and stopping me before a picture of a young naked man sitting amid some grey rocks, with grey trees and a grey sky. The young man in the picture had dark curly hair, and Mildred said she would like to sit by him and put her hands through it. 'He has got big muscles just like Donald. I like a man to be strong; I hate a little man, and Donald is over six feet. Donald's chest is covered with hair and his legs and arms are all rough. Lovely! Last night we stood side by side before the glass without a stitch on. I did look a little tot beside him, and it is jolly to put one's hand into a shaggy chest. I wonder why I speak to you like this; I never dared to speak to a man like this before, but you're so sympathetic. And somehow I feel that you've had a good time yourself; you wouldn't be so sympathetic if you hadn't.'

We wandered on, talking of love and lovers, our conversation occasionally interrupted, for however interested I was in Mildred, and I was very much interested, the sight of a picture sometimes called my attention away from her. When we came to the sculpture-room it seemed to me that Mildred was more interested in sculpture than in painting, for she stopped suddenly before Rodin's "L'âge d'airain," and I began to wonder if her mind were really accessible to the beauty of the sculptor's art, or if her interest were entirely in the model who had

posed before Rodin. Sculpture is a more primitive art than painting; sculpture and music are the two primitive arts, and they are therefore open to the appreciation of the vulgar—at least that is how I tried to correlate Mildred with Rodin, and at the same moment the thought rose up in my mind that one so interested in sex as Mildred was could not be without interest in art. For though it be true that sex is antecedent to art, art was enlisted in the service of sex very early in the history of the race, and has, if a colloquialism may be allowed here, done yeoman service ever since. Even in modern days, notwithstanding the invention of the telephone and the motor-car, we are still dependent upon art for the beginning of our courtships. To-day the courtship begins by the man and woman sending one another books. Before books were invented music served the purpose of the lover. For when man ceased to capture woman, he went to the river's edge and cut a reed and made it into a flute and played it for her pleasure; and when he had won her with his music, he began to take an interest in the tune for its own sake. That Donald would make a good model for Pan, I had no doubt. From all I had heard of him he seemed to be the god himself returned to earth, if he had ever really left it. The shaggy god seemed more in the key than Rodin's dream of a slender boy, and that boy, too, swaying like a lily in some ecstasy of efflorescence. Yet Mildred seemed to admire them both, and equally.

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'The only fault I find with him is that he is not long enough from the knee to the foot, and the thigh seems too long. I like the greater length to be from the knee to the foot, rather than from the knee to the hip. Now, have I said anything foolish?'

'Not the least. I think you are right. I prefer your proportions. A short tibia is not pretty.'

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'I am sure some Italian boys are long from the knee to the ankle,' and a look of reverie came into her eyes. 'I don't know if I told you that we are going to Italy next week?'

'Yes, you told me.'

'But I haven't told you how I made Donald's acquaintance,' and turning her back on the statue, she began to tell me how she and her mother were once living in a boarding-house in the same square in which Donald's father lived; they used to walk in the square, and one day, as she was running home trying to escape a shower, he came forward with his umbrella. That was in July, a few days before she went away to Tenby for a month. It was at Tenby that she became intimate with Toby Wells, who succeeded for a time in putting Donald out of her mind. 'Toby's mother was there, and we used to send the two mammas off for a drive, and have the dining-room all the afternoon to ourselves.'

'But you like Donald much better than Toby?'

'Of course I do; he came here to marry me. Oh yes, I've forgotten all about Toby. You see, I met Donald when I went back to London.' 'When you went back to London,' I repeated, and listened to her account how she and Donald used to hire rooms in different parts of the town in order that they might not be traced.

'Donald used to have to walk sometimes round Pimlico to find a suitable lodging. I always told him to get one, if possible, over a milliner's shop. We used to meet twice a week, and in a month or two all the lodgings in Bloomsbury were exhausted, for we never went twice to the same place. We often spent half-days together. At twelve I arrived in a hansom, and I stopped till five. Once the tray was on the floor; we had forgotten it; the room was dark, and I jumped out of bed, and put my foot into the marmalade. But do look at that woman's back;

see where her head is. I wonder what made Rodin put a woman in that position?'

She looked at me, and there was a look of curious inquiry in her face. Overcome with a sudden shyness, I hastened to assure her that the statue was "La Danaïde."

Rodin often introduces a trivial voluptuousness into art; his sculpture may be sometimes called *l'article de Paris;* it is occasionally soiled by the sentiment of which Gounod was the first exponent.

'Did you ever see a picture called "Vertige"—a woman lying back on a sofa, and a man behind the sofa leaning over kissing her? Donald says I shut my eyes to be kissed, just like that.'

'I see you're full of remembrance of last night. Clearly this is not a day to walk about a picture gallery with you. Come, let us sit down, and we'll talk about lighter things, about lovers. You won't mind telling me; you know you can trust me. Come, how many lovers have there been before Donald?'

'Oh, well, dozens. But I don't believe a man thinks any the worse of you for having done it, and I'm always quite honest. I admitted to Donald that there had been two . . . but of course I've been a devil. It happened first when I was sixteen. A friend of my brother's, a hunting friend, used to ride every day to see us; and he did look nice in his hunting-breeches and coat; he used to kiss me—of course I liked that, and one day it happened in the loft. . . . Oh, it was hot in that hay! After that we more than did it.'

'And how did that love-affair end?'

'He had to go away, and of course there were others.'

'And every time you fancy you are in love?'

'Oh, bless you, no! I have a great fancy for Donald, more than I've ever had. But it is a feeling that goes off.'

'One of these days you will meet a man who will absorb

you utterly, and all these passing passions will wax to one passion that will know no change.'

'Do you think so? I wonder.'

'Do you doubt it?'

'I don't think any one man could absorb me, no one man could fill my life.'

'Not even Donald?'

'Donald is wonderful; he takes me by the shoulders, and drawing me to him, he cries, "Oh, don't speak to me, don't speak," and sometimes he is like a wild Indian. Do you remember that morning, a few days after we arrived?'

'Your wedding night?'

'Yes, my wedding night.'

We are interested in any one who is himself or herself, and this girl was certainly herself and nothing but herself. Travelling about as she did, with her quiet, respectable mother, who never suspected anything, she seemed to indicate a type—type is hardly the word, for she was an exception. Never had I seen any one like her before, her frankness and her daring: here at least was one who had the courage of her instincts. She was man-crazy, if you will, but now and then I caught sight of another Mildred when she sighed; when that little dissatisfied look appeared in her face, another Mildred only floated up for a moment, like a water-flower or weed on the surface of a stream.

'I've had some awful frights. And I'd rather marry any one than have a baby without being married. Sometimes I pray, I get so frightened, and I tell God if I get safe off this time I'll never do it again. But somehow I always do. You know I do mean to be a good girl. I think one ought to be good. But really, if you read the Bible—— Oh, must you go?—it has been such a relief talking things over with you. Shall I see you to-night? There is no one else in the hotel I can talk to, and

mamma will play the piano, and when she plays Beethoven it gets upon my nerves.' In the Luxembourg Gardens

'You play the violin, don't you?'

'Yes, I play,' and that peculiar sad look which I had begun to think was characteristic of her came into her face, and I asked myself if this sudden misting of expression should be ascribed to stupidity or to a sudden thought or emotion. 'I am sorry you're not dining at the hotel.'

'I am sorry too; I'm dining with students in the Quarter; they would amuse you.'

'I wish I were a *grisette*.'

'If you were I would take you with me. Now I must say good-bye; I have to get on with my painting.'

That night I returned to the hotel late, and went away early in the morning. But the next day she came upon me again in the Gardens, and as we walked on together she told me that Donald had gone away.

'He was obliged to return, you see; he left the office without leave, and he had only two pounds, the poor darling. I don't know if I told you that he had to borrow two pounds to come here?'

'No, you omitted that little fact. You see, you are so absorbed in yourself that you think all these things are as interesting to everybody else as they are to you.'

'Now you're unkind,' and she looked at me reproachfully. 'It is the first time you have been unsympathetic. If I talked to you it was because I thought my chatter interested you. Moreover, I believed that you were a little interested in me, and I have come all this way——'

These little ebullitions of temper were common in Mildred, and I knew that the present one would soon pass away, and that the passing might be accomplished as rapidly as possible I spoke to her of Donald.

'I don't want to talk about him. You have offended me.'

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'I'm sorry you are leaving Paris, Mildred. This is the beautiful month. How pleasant it is here—a soft diffused warmth in the air, the sunlight flickering like a live thing in the leaves, and the sound of water dripping at the end of the alley. But you don't answer. Come, tell me why you brought your fiddle-case?'

'I brought it on the chance of meeting you. I thought you might like to hear me play. We are going away to-morrow morning. I can't play in that hotel, in that stuffy little room; mamma would want to accompany me. One can do anything one likes here; no one pays any attention to anybody else,' and she pointed with her parasol to a long, thin poet, with hair floating over his shoulders, who walked up and down the other end of the alley reciting his verses.

'Perhaps your playing will interrupt him.'

'Oh, if he doesn't like it he'll move away. But I don't want to play; I can't play when I'm out of humour, and I was just in the very humour for playing until your remark about——'

'About what?'

'You know very well,' she answered.

And we pursued our little quarrel, neither one of lovers nor of friends (on my side a purely literary quarrel), till it was interrupted by the sight of two women, at the end of the sunlit alley, advancing and retiring in and out of the shine and shade, sometimes stopping to strike an attitude in keeping with the rhythms of the eighteenth-century dance that a third sister (it was now plain to me that the three were sisters) played on a fiddle whilst leaning against a tree and while she danced, for sometimes she joined her sisters in a few steps.

'They are the dancers of whom the Quarter is talking,' I said. 'Come, Mildred, let us watch the dancers who seem to be celebrating the morning.'

'I know that gavotte,' she answered, 'and will play for them if they'll let me.' In the Luxembourg Gardens

The addition of Mildred's fiddle was not perceived at first, and after a few bars the younger sister, recognising Mildred's playing as better than her own, handed her fiddle to a bystander, and the gavotte proceeded, the three old ladies bowing and pointing their toes with grace and courtesy.

'But with what intention, and who are they?' I asked myself, and sinking on a bench, I began to dream a suitable story for them, saying to myself that they were the remnant of a noble family declining into poverty for a long while. No money coming into the family, each generation was poorer than the last, till the very last, the dancers, could not do else than pray for God's help. It seemed to me that I could hear them praying together, the elder sisters in a group on their knees, the youngest striving to devise some mode whereby they might earn a living. 'It cannot be the lot of our family,' she said, 'to end in mendicancy. We shall have to go forth from this great house; we shall have to leave it, but not to beg.' The elder sisters did not believe, but the day they divided their last crusts the one to whom faith was given came upon an old letter. 'I told you,' she said, 'that we should be saved, that God in His great mercy would not turn us out into the streets to beg. This letter contains instructions how the gavotte used to be danced when our ancestors lived in the Place des Vosges.'

'But what help to us to know the true step of the gavotte?' cried the elder sister.

'A great deal,' the youngest answered gravely; 'I can play the fiddle, and we can all learn to dance; we'll dance the gavotte in the Luxembourg Gardens whenever it is fine, the true gavotte, as it was danced when Madame de Sévigné drove up in a painted coach drawn

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by six horses, and entered the courtyard of her hotel, decorated with bas-reliefs by Jean Goujon.'

This is the story that I dreamed as I sat on the bench listening to the notes, no longer like dead leaves rustling along a pathway, without accent, without rhythm, but tripping gay and pretty as the spring-time herself, Mildred bringing out the contrast between the detached and the slurred notes, the music going under her bow to the rhythm of old time, evocative of the wigs, the swords, the bows, the gallantry! How sedate! How charming! How well she understood it, and how well the old women danced to it, and how delighted every one was! She played on until the old women, unable to dance any more, sat down to listen to her, and after trying some few things which I did not know, I heard her playing a piece of music which I could not but think I had heard before—in church! Beginning it on the low string, she poured out the long, long phrase that never seems to end, so stern and so evocative of Protestantism that I could not but think of a soul going forth on its way to the Judgment Seat, telling perforce as it goes how it has desired and sought salvation, pleading almost defiantly. But Mildred could not appreciate such religious exaltation, yet it was her playing that had inspired the thought in me. Had she been taught to play it? Was she echoing another's thought? Her playing did not sound like an echo; it seemed to come from the heart, or out of some unconscious self, an antenatal self that in her present incarnation only emerged in music, borne up by some mysterious current to be sucked down by another.

She played on and on, never certain what she was going to play next; and then, as if moved by a new mood, she began to play a very simple, singing melody, interrupted now and again, so it seemed to me, by little fluttering confessions. I seemed to see a lady in white, at the close

of day, in a dusky boudoir, one of Alfred Stevens' women, only much more refined, one whose lover has been unfaithful to her, or maybe a woman who is weary of lovers, and knows not what to turn her mind to, hesitating between the convent and the ballroom. Ah, the beautiful lament—how well Mildred played it!—followed by the slight crescendo, and then the return of the soul upon itself, bewailing its weakness, confessing its follies in elegant, lovely language, seemingly speaking in a casual way, yet saying such profound things, profound even as Beethoven. 'The form is different,' I said, 'more light, more graceful, seemingly more superficial, but just as deep, for when we go to the bottom of things all things are deep, one as deep as another, just as all things are shallow, one as shallow as another; for have not mystics of every age held that things exist not in themselves, but in the eye that sees and the ear that hears?'

A crowd collected to hear her, for she was playing out of the great silence that is in every soul, in that of the light-o'-love as well as the saint, and she went on playing, apparently unaware of the number of people she was gathering about her.

'You play beautifully; why did you say you didn't like Beethoven?'

'I didn't say I didn't like Beethoven; you know very well mamma can't play the Impassionata.'

'Why aren't you always like this?'

'I don't know. One can't always be the same. I feel differently when I play; the mood only comes over me sometimes; I used to play a great deal, I only play occasionally now, just when I feel like it.'

We walked through the alleys by the statues, seeing them hardly at all, thinking of the music.

'I must be getting back,' she said. 'You see, I've got to pack up; mamma can't do any packing; I've

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to do hers for her. I hope we shall meet again some day.'

'What good would it be? I only like you when you're playing, and you're not often in the mood.'

'I'm sorry for that; perhaps if you knew me better——'

'Now you're married, and I suppose Donald will come to Rome to fetch you?'

'Oh, I don't think he'll be able. He has got no money.'

'And you'll fall in love with some one else?'

'Well, perhaps so; I don't feel that I ever could again after this week.' Stopping suddenly in front of a hosier's shop, she said, 'I like those collars, they have just come out, those turned-down ones. Do you like them as well as the great high stand-up collars about three inches deep? When they were the fashion men could hardly move their heads.' Then she made some remarks about neckties and the colour she liked best—violet. 'Yes, there's a nice shade of violet. Poor Donald! He's so handsome. I'd like to give him six pairs of silk drawers; he only has one pair, and he had dreadful boots, poor darling.'

After the hosier's shop she spoke no more about music, but a great deal about Donald; his name was upon her lips all the way down the Rue du Bac. 'Forget Donald,' I said, 'and speak to me of Mozart, Scarlatti, Chopin, but no more about Donald.' 'I can't speak about music,' she answered, 'I can only play it—sometimes,' and she ran up the stairs of the hotel, possessed completely by a Mildred that I was not a little weary of. She asked her mother to play the "Brooklyn Cake-Walk," and she danced 'the lovely two-step' as she had learned at Nice for my enjoyment. I noticed that she looked extraordinarily comic as she skipped up and down the room. The line of her chin deflected, and that always gives a slightly comic look to a

face. She came downstairs with me, and, standing at the hotel door, she said, 'I want to tell you something that happened yesterday, when I was out with mamma. It was in Cook's. When we went in I saw a Yank—oh, so nicely dressed! Lovely patent leather boots, and I thought, 'Oh, dear, lovely man, he'll never look at me.' But presently he did, and he made me a sign, just a little one, with his tongue, you know. Then he took out his card-case and folded up a card, and put it on the ledge behind him, and gave me a look and moved away. So I walked over and took it up. Mamma never saw, but the clerks did, and I'm afraid I got very red. He has a flat in the Avenue de l'Opéra; he must be rich. When I got home I wrote to him. I said that, as I saw he was an American, I would forgive his extraordinary behaviour, that had so much surprised me. I was leaving Paris to-morrow for Rome, and if by any chance his lines should ever fall in that direction, c/o Thomas Cook would always find me, and then signed my name—but, of course, he'll never come.' In the Luxembourg Gardens

. . . . . .

I have reported Mildred's story truthfully at a particular moment of her life. Those who travel meet people now and again whose individuality is so strong that it survives. Mildred's has survived many years, and I have written this account of it because it seems to me to throw a gleam into the mystery of life, without, however, doing anything to destroy the mystery.

XI

IT WAS in the vastness of Westminster Hall that I saw her for the first time—saw her pointed face, her red hair, her brilliant teeth. The next time was in her own home—a farmhouse that had been rebuilt and A Remembrance

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was half a villa. At the back were wheat-stacks, a noisy thrashing-machine, a pigeon-cote; and from the stables the great farm horses seemed to be always going to their work on the downs or returning from it amid jangle of harness and cries of yokels. In a garden planted with variegated firs she tended her flowers all day; and in the parlour, where we assembled in the evening, her husband smoked his pipe in silence; the young ladies, their blonde hair hanging down their backs, played waltzes; she alone talked; her conversation was effusive, her laughter abundant and bright. I had only just turned eighteen, and was deeply interested in religious problems, and one day I told her the book I carried in my pocket, and sometimes pretended to study, was Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. My explanation of the value of the work did not seem to strike her, and her manifest want of interest in the discussion of religious problems surprised me, for she passed for a religious woman, and I failed to understand how mere belief could satisfy any one. One day in the greenhouse, whither I had wandered, she interrupted some allusion to the chapter entitled, "The Deduction of the Categories," with a burst of laughter, and declared that she would call me Kant. The nickname was not adopted by the rest of the family—another was invented which appealed more to their imagination—but she held to the name she had given me, and during the course of our long friendship never addressed me by any other.

There was no reason why I should have become the friend of these people. We were opposed in character and temperament, but somehow we seemed to suit. There was little reflection on either side; certainly there was none on mine; at that time I was incapable of any; my youth was a vague dream, and my friends were the shadows in the dream. I saw and understood

them only as one sees and understands the summer clouds when, lying at length in the tall grass, one watches the clouds curl and uncurl. In such mood, visit succeeded visit, and before I was aware, the old Squire, who walked about the downs in a tall hat, died, and my friends moved into the family place, distant about a hundred yards—an Italian house, sheltered among the elms that grew along the seashore. And in their new house they became to me more real than shadows; they were then like figures on a stage, and the building of the new wing and the planting of the new garden interested me as might an incident in a play; and I left them as I might leave a play, taking up another thread in life, thinking very little of them, if I thought at all. Years passed, and after a long absence abroad, I met them by chance in London.

Again visit succeeded visit. My friends were the same as when I had left them; their house was the same, the conduct of their lives was the same. I do not think I was conscious of any change until, one day, walking with one of the girls in the garden, a sensation of home came upon me. I seemed always to have known these people; they seemed part and parcel of my life. It was a sudden and enchanting awaking of love; life seemed to lengthen out like the fields at dawn, and to become distinct and real in many new and unimagined ways. Above all, I was surprised to find myself admiring her who, fifteen years ago, had appeared to me not a little dowdy. She was now fifty-five, but such an age seemed impossible for so girl-like a figure and such young and effusive laughter. I was, however, sure that she was fifteen years older than when I first saw her, but those fifteen years had brought each within range of the other's understanding and sympathy. We became companions. I noticed what dresses she wore,

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and told her which I liked her best in. She was only cross with me when I surprised her in the potting-shed wearing an old bonnet, out of which hung a faded poppy. She used to cry, 'Don't look at me, Kant. I know I'm like an old gipsy woman.'

'You look charming,' I said, 'in that old bonnet.'

She put down the watering-can and laughingly took it from her head. 'It is a regular show.'

'Not at all. You look charming when working in the greenhouse . . . I like you better like that than when you are dressed to go to Brighton.'

'Do you? . . . I thought you liked me best in my new black silk.'

'I think I like you equally well at all times.'

We looked at each other. There was an accent of love in our friendship. 'And strange, is it not,' I said, 'I did not admire you half as much when I knew you first?'

'How was that? I was quite a young woman then.'

'Yes,' I said, regretting my own words; 'but, don't you see, at that time I was a mere boy—I lived in a dream, hardly seeing what passed around me.'

'Yes, of course,' she said gaily, 'you were so young then, all you saw in me was a woman with a grown-up son.'

Her dress was pinned up, she held in her hand the bonnet which she said made her look like an old gipsy woman, and the sunlight fell on the red hair, now grown a little thinner, but each of the immaculate teeth was an elegant piece of statuary, and not a wrinkle was there on that pretty, vixen-like face. Her figure especially showed no signs of age, and if she and her daughters were in the room it was she I admired.

One day, while seeking through the store-room for a sheet of brown paper to pack up a book in, I came across

a pile of old *Athenæums*. Had I happened upon a set of drawings by Raphael I could not have been more astonished. Not one, but twenty copies of the *Athenæums* in a house where never a book was read. I looked at the dates—three-and-thirty years ago. At that moment she was gathering some withering apples from the floor. A Remembrance

'Whoever,' I cried, 'could have left these copies of the *Athenæum* here?'

'Oh, they are my *Athenæums*,' she said. 'I always used to read the *Athenæum* when I was engaged to be married to Mr. Bartlett. You must have heard of him—he wrote that famous book about the Euphrates. I was very fond of reading in those days, and he and I used to talk about books in the old garden at Wandsworth. It is all built over now.'

This sudden discovery of dead tastes and sympathies seemed to draw us closer together, and in the quietness of the store-room, amid the odour of the apples, her face flushed with all the spirit of her girlhood, and I understood her as if I had lived it with her.

'You must have been a delightful girl. I believe if I had known you then I should have asked you to marry me.'

'I believe you would, Kant. . . . So you thought that because I never read books now that I had never read any? You have no idea how fond of books I was once, and if I had married Mr. Bartlett I believe I should have been quite a blue-stocking. But then Dick came, and my father thought it a more suitable match, and I had young children to look after. We were very poor in those days; the old Squire never attempted to help us.'

At this time I seemed to be always with my friends; I came to see them when I pleased, and sometimes I stayed a week, sometimes I stayed six months; but however long my visit, they said it was not long enough. The five-

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o'clock from London brought me down in time for dinner, and I used to run up to my room just as if I were a member of the family. If I missed this train and came down by the six-o'clock, I found them at dinner, and then the lamplight seemed to accentuate our affectionate intimacy, and to pass round the table shaking hands with them all was in itself a peculiar delight. On one of these occasions, missing her from her place, I said, 'Surely you have not allowed her to remain till this hour in the garden?'

I was told that she was ill, and had been for the last fortnight confined to her room. Several days passed; allusion to her illness became more frequent; and then I heard that the local doctor would accept the responsibility no longer, and had demanded a consultation with a London physician. But she would not hear of so much expense for her sake, and declared herself to be quite sufficiently well to go to London.

The little pony carriage took her to the station, and I saw her in the waiting-room wrapped up in shawls. She was ashamed to see me, but in truth the disease had not changed her as she thought it had. There are some who are so beautiful that disease cannot deform them, and she was endowed with such exquisite life that she would turn to smile back on you over the brink of the grave.

We thought the train was taking her from us for ever, but she came back hopeful. Operation had been pronounced unnecessary, but she remained in her room many days before the medicine had reduced her sufficiently to allow her to come downstairs. Nearly a month passed, and then she appeared, looking strangely well, and every day she grew better until she regained her girlish figure and the quick dance of movement which was a grace and a joy in the silent peacefulness of the old house. Her

grace and lightness were astonishing, and one day, coming down dressed to go in the carriage, she raced across the library, opened her escritoire, hunting through its innumerable drawers for one of the sums of money which she kept there wrapped up in pieces of paper. A Remembrance

'How nice you look! You are quite well now, and your figure is like a girl of fifteen.'

She turned and looked at me with that love in her face which an old woman feels for a young man who is something less and something more to her than her son. As a flush of summer lingers in autumn's face, so does a sensation of sex float in such an affection. There is something strangely tender in the yearning of the young man for the decadent charms of her whom he regards as the mother of his election, and who, at the same time, suggests to him the girl he would have loved if time had not robbed him of her youth. There is a waywardness in such an affection that formal man knows not of.

I remember that day, for it was the last time I saw her beautiful. Soon after we noticed that she did not quite recover, and we thought it was because she did not take her medicine regularly. She spent long hours alone in her greenhouse, the hot sun playing fiercely on her back, and we supplicated—I was the foremost among her supplicators—that she should not carry the heavy flower-pots to and fro, nor cans of water from the tank at the bottom of the garden, and to save her I undertook to water her flowers for her. But she was one of those who would do everything herself, who thought that if she did not shut the door it was not properly shut. She was always speaking of her work. 'If I leave my work,' she would say, 'even for one week, everything gets so behindhand that I despair of ever being able to make up the arrears. The worst of it is that no one can take up my work where I leave off.' And as she grew worse this idea developed

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until it became a kind of craze. At last, speculating on the strength of our friendship, I told her her life belonged to her husband and children, and that she had no right to squander it in this fashion. I urged that with ordinary forbearance she might live for twenty years, but at the present rate of force-expenditure she could not hope to live long. I spoke brutally, but she smiled, knowing how much I loved her; and, looking back, it seems to me she must have known she could not be saved, and preferred to give the last summer of her life entirely to her flowers. It was pathetic to see her, poor moribund one, sitting through the long noons alone, the sun beating in upon her through the fiery glass, tending her flowers. I remember how she used to come in in the evenings exhausted, and lie down on the little sofa. Her husband, with an anxious, quiet, kindly look in his eyes, used to draw the skirt over her feet and sit down at her feet, tender, loving, soliciting the right to clasp her hand, as if they had not been married thirty years, but were only sweethearts. At that time we used all to implore her to allow us to send for the London doctor, and I remember how proud I was when she looked up and said, 'Very well, Kant, it shall be as you wish it.' I remember, too, waiting by the little wood at the corner of the lane, where I should be sure to meet the doctor as he came up from the station. The old elms were beautiful with green, the sky was beautiful with blue, and we lingered, looking out on the fair pasturage where the sheep moved so peacefully, and with the exquisite warmth of the summer sun in our flesh, we talked of her who was to die.

'Is it then incurable?'

'There is no such thing as cure. . . . We cannot create, we can only stimulate an existent force, and every time we stimulate we weaken, and so on until exhaustion. Our drugs merely precipitate the end.'

'Then there is no hope?' A Remembrance

'I'm afraid not.'

'Can she live for five years?'

'I should think it extremely improbable.

'What length of life do you give her?'

'You are asking too much. . . . I should say about a year.'

The doctor passed up the leafy avenue and I remained looking at the silly sheep, seeing in all the green landscape only a dark, narrow space. That day I saw her for the last time. She was sitting on a low chair, very ill indeed, and the voice, weak, but still young and pure, said, 'Is that you, Kant? Come round here and let me look at you.' Amid my work in London, I used to receive letters from my friends, letters telling me of the march of the disease, and with each letter death grew more and more realisable, until her death seemed to stand in person before me. It could not be much longer delayed, and the letter came which told me that 'Mother was not expected to live through the winter.' Soon after came another letter, 'Mother will not live another month'; and this was followed by a telegram, 'Mother is dying; come at once.'

It was a bleak and gusty afternoon in the depth of winter, and the Sunday train stopped at every station, and the journey dragged its joggling length of four hours out to the weary end. The little station shivered by an icy sea, and going up the lane the wind rattled and beat my face like an iron. I hurried, looking through the trees for the lights that would shine across the park if she were not dead; welcome indeed to my eyes were the gleaming yellow squares, and slipping in the back way, and meeting the butler in the passage, I said, 'How is she?'

'Very bad indeed, sir.'

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She did not die that night, nor the next, nor yet the next, and as we waited for death, slow but sure of foot, to come and take what remained of her from us, I thought often of the degradation that these lingering deaths impose upon the watchers, and how they force into disgraceful prominence all that is animal in us. For however great our grief may be, we must eat and drink, and must even talk of other things than the beloved one whom we are about to lose. For we may not escape from our shameful nature, and eating and drinking we commented on the news that came hourly from the sick-room, 'Mother will not live the week.' A few days after, 'Mother will hardly get over Sunday'; and the following week, 'Mother will not pass the night.' Lunch was the meal that shocked the most, and I often thought, 'She is dying upstairs while we are eating jam tarts.'

One day I had to ride over the downs for some letters, and when, on my return, I walked in from the stables, I met her son. He was in tears, and sobbing he said, 'My dear old chap, it is all over; she is gone.' I took his hand and burst into tears. Then one of her daughters came downstairs and I was told how she had passed away. A few hours before she died she had asked for a silk thread; for she always passed a silk thread between her beautiful teeth before sleeping. Her poor arms were shrunken to the very bone and were not larger than a little child's. Haggard and over-worn, she was lifted up, and the silk was given to her, and the glass was held before her, but her eyes were glazed with death, and she fell back exhausted. Then her breathing grew thicker, and at last, and quite suddenly, she realised that she was about to die; and looking round wildly, not seeing those who were collected about her bed, she said, 'Oh, to die when so much remains undone. How will they get on without me!'

I helped to write the letters, so melancholy, so conventional, and expressing so little of our grief, and while the girls sat weaving wreaths for the dead, wreaths and letters of sympathy arrived. The girls went upstairs where the dead lay, and when they returned they told me how beautiful their mother looked. And during those dreadful days, how many times did I refuse to look on her, dead! My memory of her was an intensely living thing, and I could not be persuaded to sacrifice it. We thought the day would never come, but it came. There was a copious lunch, cigars were smoked, the crops, the price of lambs, and the hunting, which the frost had much interfered with, were alluded to furtively, and the conversation was interspersed with references to the excellent qualities of the deceased. I remember that the weather was beautiful, full of pure sunlight, with the colour of the coming spring in the face of the heavens the day the funeral procession wound along the barren sea road, the lily-covered coffin on a trolley, drawn by the estate labourers. That day every slightest line and every colour of that bitter, barren coast impressed themselves on my mind, and I saw, more distinctly than I had ever done before, the old church with red-brown roofs and square dogmatic tower, the forlorn village, the grey undulations of the hills, whose ring of trees showed aloft like a plume. In the church the faces of the girls were discomposed with grief, and they wept hysterically in each other's arms. The querulous voice of the organ, the ugly hymn, and the grating voice of the aged parson standing in white surplice on the altar steps were so hard to bear that I closed my eyes and shut out the sight of old men, white-haired and tottering, impelled by senile curiosity, pressing forward to look into her grave.

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The crowd dispersed quickly; the relatives and the friends of the deceased, as they returned home, sought

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those who were most agreeable and sympathetic, and matters of private interest were discussed. Those who had come from a distance consulted their watches, and an apology to life was implicit in their looks, and the time they had surrendered to something outside of life evidently struck them as being strangely disproportionate. The sunlight laughed along the sea, and the young corn was thick in the fields; leaves were beginning in the branches, larks rose higher and higher, disappearing in the pale air, and as we approached the woods the amorous cawing of the rooks reminded us that she would never hear the pleasant sounds of the spring-time again, and that our lives would not be the same. And dropping behind the chattering crowd that in mourning weed wended its way through the sad spring landscape, I thought of her whom I had loved so long, and of memory as a shrine where we can worship without shame, of friendship, and of the pure escape it offers us from our natural instincts; I remembered that there is love other than that which the young man offers to her he would take to wife, and I knew how much more intense and strangely personal was my love of her than the love which that day I saw the world offering to its creatures.

XII

Bring in the Lamp

FOR MANY days there has not been a wind in the trees, and the landscape reminds me of a somnambulist—the same silence, the same mystery, the same awe. The thick foliage of the ash never stirs; even the fingery leaves hanging out from the topmost twigs are still. The hawthorns growing out of a tumbled wall are turning yellow and brown, the hollyhocks are over, the chrysanthemums are beginning. Last night a faint pink sky melted into the solemn blue of midnight. There were few stars;

Jupiter, wearisomely brilliant, sailed overhead; red Mars hung above the horizon under a round, decorative moon. The last days of September! and every day the light dies a few minutes earlier. At half-past five one perceives a chilliness about one's feet; no doubt there is a touch of frost in the air; that is why the leaves hang so plaintively. Without a doubt there is a touch of frost in the air, and that is why one is tempted to put a match to the fire. It is hard to say whether one feels cold, or whether one desires the company of the blaze. Tea is over, the dusk gathers, and the brute Despondency lurks in the corners. At the close of day, when one's work is over, benumbing thoughts arise in the study and in the studio. Think of a painter of architecture finishing the thirty-sixth pillar—there are forty-three—the dusk has interrupted his labour, and an ache begins in his heart as he rises from the easel. Be his talent great or little, he must ask himself who will care should he leave the last seven pillars unfinished? Think of the writer of stories! Two, three, or four more stories are required to make up a requisite number of pages. The dusk has interrupted his labour, and he rises from his writing-table asking who will care whether the last stories are written or left unwritten? If he write them his words will run green for a season, mayhap bloom like the lilac, but only to blacken and die like lilac-blooms, and the flowers he deemed immortal will be discovered to be briefer than the rose. 'Why should it be otherwise?' he asks, 'for stories are often briefer even than the men who write them, and are certainly born for no other end than to be forgotten. In twenty years, in five, perhaps in a week, I may be among the gone, sooner than the flowers in my garden; so wherefore do I rue that these strings of words will not be read by men always? We are being forgotten day by day, and our stories are less than we. A perplexing riddle, life is; it comes to us

Bring in the Lamp

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we know not whence, and goes we know not whither; and we are always lamenting, if not for ourselves, for our stories.' And having vented the melancholy that arises every day at the decline of light in words that men have been thinking and speaking since the beginning, he will try to remember the years gone by, and his own life will seem to him hardly more real than the day's work on the easel if he be a painter, at the writing-table if he be a writer. He will seem to himself like a horse going round and round a well; the horse is pumping water—water is necessary; but art, even if the work be good enough to be called art, is not needed. Whosoever he may be, proof is not wanting that the world can do well without his work. But however sure he may feel that that is so—and in the hours I describe it seems sure indeed—he will have to continue his labour; man was born to labour, as the oldest texts say; he must continue to drive his furrow to the end of the field, otherwise he would lie down and die of sheer boredom, or go mad. He asks himself why he became a maker of idols—'An idol-maker, an idol-maker,' he cries, 'who can find no worshippers for his wares! Better the sailor before the mast or the soldier in the field.' His thoughts break away, and he begins to dream of a life of action. It would be a fine thing, he thinks, to start away in a ship for South America, where there are forests and mountain ranges almost unknown. He has read of the wild shepherds of the Pampas, so inured to horseback that they cannot walk a mile without resting; and sitting by the fire at the end of the autumn day, he can see them galloping through the long grass of the Pampas, whirling three balls attached by leathern thongs. The weapon is called the bolas, and flying through the air it encircles the legs of the guanaco, bringing it to the earth. But if he went to America, would he find content in a hunter's life? Can the artist put by his dreams? They would

follow him, and sitting by the camp-fire in the evening, he would begin to think how he might paint the shadow or tell the uncouth life of those who sit around him eating of jerked meat. No, there is nothing for him but to follow the furrow; he will have to write stories till his brain fades or death intervenes. And what story shall he write to complete his book?—since it must be completed, it forming part of the procession of things. A sound of church bells is in the still air, sounds of peace and long tradition, and he likes to listen, thinking of the hymns and the homely sermon of the good minister. Shall he get up and go? Perhaps the service would soothe his despondency; but there is not courage enough in his heart. He can do no more than strike a match; the fire lights up. It is one of those autumn afternoons with just that touch of frost in the air which makes a fire welcome, and as he crouches in his arm-chair the warmth soothes the spirit and flesh, and in the doze of the flesh the spirit awakes. What! is the story coming now? Yes; it is forming independently of his will, and he says, 'Let it take shape.' And the scene that rises up in his mind is a ballroom; he sees women all a-row, delicate necks and arms of young girls, and young men in black collected about the doorways. Some couples are moving to the rhythm of a languorous waltz, a French imitation of Strauss, a waltz never played now—forgotten, perhaps, by everybody but him; a waltz he heard twenty long years ago, and ever since it has lain forgotten in his brain, but now he hears it all; never before was he able to remember that *coda*, and it comes with a scent of violets in it—the perfume of a little blonde woman who dreams as she dances with the young man blonde as herself. Let it be that the choice was made by her rather than by him, and let her wear crêpe de Chine, with perhaps a touch of white somewhere, and a white frill

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about her neck. Let her be a widow whose husband died six months after marriage, six months ago. Let her have come from some distant part of the world, from America—Baltimore will do as well as any other, perhaps better, for the dreamer by the fireside has no faintest notion whether Baltimore lies in the middle of a plain or surrounded by mountains, whether it be built of marble or brick or stone. Let her come from Baltimore, from some prettily-named street—Cathedral Street—there must be a Cathedral Street in Baltimore. The sound of the church bells in the air no doubt led the dreamer to choose Cathedral Street for her to live in. The dance would have to be an informal one, some little dance that she might come to though her husband was only dead six months, and the two together would pass between the different groups, sliding forward and back, avoiding the dancer here, and reappearing from behind a group of French men and women bumping up and down, hammering the floor, the men holding the women as if they were guitars. An American widow dances, her hand upon her partner's shoulder, fitting herself into him, finding a nook between his arm and side, and her head is leaned upon his shoulder. She follows his every step; when he reverse there is never a hitch or jolt; they are always going to the same rhythm. How delicious are these moments of sex and rhythm, and how intense if the woman should take a little handkerchief, edged with black, and thrust it into her partner's cuff with some little murmur implying that she wishes him to keep it. To whomsoever these things happen life becomes a song. A little event of this kind lifts one out of the humdrum of material existence. I suppose the cause of our extraordinary happiness is that one is again, as it were, marching in step; one has dropped into the Great Procession and is doing the great Work actively. There is no denying it, that in these moments

of sex one does feel more conscious than at any other time of rhythm, and, after all, rhythm is joy. It is rhythm that makes music, that makes poetry, that makes pictures; what we are all after is rhythm, and the whole of the young man's life is going to a tune as he walks home, to the same tune as the stars are going over his head. All things are singing together. And he sings as he passes the *concierge's* lodge, pitying the poor couple asleep, for what do they know of love?—humble beasts unable to experience the joy of rhythm. Exalted, he goes upstairs; he is on rhythm bent, words follow ideas, rhymes follow words, and he sits at his writing-table, and drawing forth a sheet of paper he writes. A song moves within him, a fragrant song of blonde hair and perfume—the handkerchief inspires him, and he must get the rondel perfect, a rondel, or something like a rondel, which he will read to her to-morrow, for she has appointed to meet him—where? No better place for lovers than the garden of L'Église de la Trinité. His night passes in shallow sleep; but his wakings are delicious, for at every awaking he perceives a faint odour of violets. He dreams of blonde hair and how carefully he will dress himself in the morning. Would she like him better in his yellow or his grey trousers? Or should he wear a violet or a grey necktie? These are the questions that are important; and what more important questions are there for a young man of twenty-five going to meet a delicious little Dresden figure, with blonde hair and forget-me-not eyes, in the garden of L'Église de la Trinité? He knows she will come, only he hopes not to be kept too long waiting, and at ten o'clock he is there for sure, walking up and down, watching the nursemaids and the perambulators drawn up in the shade. On another occasion he might have looked at the nursemaids, but this day the prettiest is plain-featured; they are but the ordinary bread of

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existence, and to-day he is going to partake of more exquisite fare. He hopes so, at least, and the twenty years that have gone by have done nothing to obliterate the moment when he saw her walk across the gravelled space, a dainty little woman with blonde hair, dressed in black, coming to her appointment. The dreamer sees her and her lover going together out of the garden. He follows them down the street, hearing them talking, trying to decide where they shall go to breakfast. To take her to a Parisian restaurant would be a common pleasure. He is bent on taking her to the country. Both want to sit on the warm grass and kiss each other, peradventure. All souls dream of the country when they are in love; and she would hear him tell her that he loves her under the shade of trees. She is Chloë, and he is whomsoever was Chloë's lover. Whither are they going? Are they going to Bougival? Many things may be said in its favour, but he has been there; and he has been to Meudon; he would go with her to some place where he has never been before, and where perchance he will never be again. Vincennes? The name is a pretty one, and it lures him. And thither they go, arriving about eleven o'clock, a little early for breakfast.

The sun is shining, the sky is blue, white clouds are unfolding, like gay pennants they seem to him. He is glad the sun is shining—all is omen, all is oracle. Her poem is in his pocket; he must read it to her, but where? Yonder is some rough grass; he will read it under the bushes; and they regret the laziness of the bushes in coming into thick leaf, for lovers think that this world is made only for lovers, that love is of serious account, and the object of all music and poetry, of pictures and sculpture, is to incite love, to praise love, to make love seem the only serious occupation. And Vincennes, its trees and its white clouds lifting themselves in the blue sky,

was regarded that day by these lovers as a very suitable setting for their gallantries. Bring in the Lamp

The dear little woman sits—the dreamer can see her on the warm grass—hidden as well as she can, screening herself behind some bushes, the black crêpe dress hiding her feet, or pretending to hide them. White stockings were the fashion; she wears white stockings; and how pretty and charming they look in the little black shoes! The younger generation now only knows black stockings; the charms of white are only known to the middle-aged. But the young man must read her his poem. He wants her to hear it because the poem pleases him, and because he feels that his poem will aid him to her affections. And when she asks him if he has thought of her during the night, he has to answer that her violet-scented handkerchief awoke him many times, and that the wakings were delicious. What time did he go to bed? Very late, for he sat up writing a poem to her telling of the beauty of her blonde hair.

Lady, unwreath thy hair,
That is so long and fair.
May flowers are not more sweet
Than the shower of loosened hair
That will fall around my feet.
Lady, unwreath thy hair,
That is so long and fair.

The golden curls they paint
Round the forehead of a saint
Ne'er glittered half so bright
As thy enchanted hair,
Full of shadow, full of light.
Lady, unwreath thy hair,
That is so long and fair.

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Lady, unwreath thy hair,
That is so long and fair,
And weave a web of gold
Of thy enchanted hair,
Till all be in its hold.
Lady, unwreath thy hair,
That is so long and fair.

'Do let me see your poem. It is charming. But what do you mean by "enchanted hair"? Is it that my hair has enchanted you? "And weave a web of gold" . . . "Unwreath"—do you mean unloose my hair?'

'Dame, tressez vos cheveux blonds
Ils sont si lourds, ils sont si longs.

It doesn't go well into French!'

'I don't understand French, but I like your poem in English. Do you know, I like it very much.'

It is easy to obtain appreciation for poetry in such circumstances. Horace's best ode would not please a young woman as much as the mediocre verses of the young man she is in love with. It is well that it should be so, and this is the dreamer's criticism of life as he sits lost in shadow, lit up here and there by the blaze. He retraces in memory the warmth of the grass and the scattered bushes, and tries to remember if he put his hand on her white ankle while she was reading the poem. So far as he can remember he did, and she checked him and was rather cross, declaring, just like the puss cat, that he must not do such things, and that she would not have come out with him had she thought he was going to misbehave himself in that way. But she is not really angry with him. Could she be with him who wrote that her hair was enchanted? And what concern is it of hers that the phrase was borrowed from another poet? Her

concern is that he should think her hair enchanted, and her hands go up to it. The young man prays her to unloose it, to let it fall about her shoulders, saying that he must be paid for his poem, and the only payment he will accept is to see her hair unwreathed. Bring in the Lamp

'But I cannot "unwreath" my hair on the common. Is there no other payment?' and she leans a little forward, her eyes fixed upon him. The dreamer can see her eyes, clear young eyes, but he cannot remember her mouth, how full the lips were or how thin; ah, but he remembers kissing her! On such a day a young man kisses his young woman, and it may be doubted if the young woman would ever go out with him again if he refrained, the circumstances being as I describe. But the lovers of Vincennes have to be careful. The lady with the enchanted hair has just spied a middle-aged gentleman with his two sons sitting on a bench at a little distance.

'Do be quiet, I beg of you. I assure you he saw us.'

'If he did it would matter little; he would remember his young days, before his children were born. Moreover, he looks kindly disposed.'

Later the lovers address themselves to him, for time wears away even with lovers, and the desire of breakfast being upon them, the kindly disposed gentleman tells them the way to the restaurant. He insists even on walking part of the way with them, and they learn from him that the restaurant has only just been opened for the season; the season is not yet fairly begun, but no doubt they will be able to get something to eat, an omelette and a cutlet.

Now the accomplished story-teller would look forward to this restaurant; already his thoughts would fix themselves on a *cabinet particulier*, and his fancy, if he were a naturalistic writer, would rejoice in recording the fact

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that the mirror was scrawled over with names of lovers, and he would select the ugliest names. But, dear reader, if you are expecting a *cabinet particulier* in this story, and an amorous encounter to take place therein, turn the page at once, for this story contains nothing that will shock your—shall I say your prudish susceptibilities? When the auburn-haired poet and the corn-coloured American lunched at Vincennes they chose a table by the window in the great saloon lined with tables. It overlooked a lake island, and the morning sun was shining through tall saplings. The eyes of the lovers admired the scene, and they admired, too, the pretty reflections, and the swans moving about the island. The accomplished story-teller cries, 'But if there is to be no scene in the restaurant, how is the story to finish?' Why should stories finish? And would a sensual ending be a better end than, let us say, that the lovers are caught in a shower as they leave the restaurant? Such an accident might have happened: nothing is more likely than a shower at the end of April or the beginning of May, and I can imagine the lovers of Vincennes rushing into one of the *concierge's* lodges at the gates of the villas.

'For a few minutes,' they say; 'the rain will be over soon.'

But they are not long there when a servant appears carrying three umbrellas; she gives one to Marie, one to me, she keeps one for herself.

'But who is she? You told me you knew no one at Vincennes.'

'No more I do.'

'But you must know the people who live here; the servant says that Monsieur (meaning her master) knows Monsieur (meaning you).'

'I swear to you I don't know anybody here; but let's go, it will be rather fun.'

'But what shall we say in explanation? Shall we say we're cousins?' Bring in the Lamp

'Nobody believes in cousins; shall we say we're husband and wife?'

The dreamer sees two figures; memory reflects them like a convex mirror, reducing them to a tenth their original size, and he sees them clearly, and he follows them through the rain up the steps of the villa—to the *perron*, an explicit word that the English language lacks. The young man continues to protest that he never was at Vincennes before, that he knows no one living there, and they are both a little excited by the adventure. Who can be the owner of the house? A man of ordinary tastes, it would seem, and while waiting for their host the lovers examine the Turkey carpet, the richly upholstered sofas and chairs.

A pretty little situation, from which an accomplished story-teller could evolve some playful imaginings. The accomplished story-teller would see at once that *le bon bourgeois et sa dame* and the children are learning English, and here is an occasion of practice for the whole family. The accomplished story-teller would see at once that the family must take a fancy to the young couple, and in his story the rain must continue to fall in such torrents as would prevent the lovers from returning to Paris. Why should they not stay to dinner? After dinner the accomplished story-teller would bring in a number of neighbours, and set them dancing and singing. It is easy to suppose that *la bourgeoise* was "at home" that evening. If so the young couple would sit in a distant corner oblivious to all but their own sweet selves, *le bourgeois et sa dame* watching them with interest, deeming it a kindness to keep the secret that there were no trains after twelve. At last, when the lovers determined that they must depart, *le bourgeois* and *la bourgeoise* would

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tell them that the last train left an hour ago, and that there was no possibility of returning to Paris that night. A pretty little situation, one that might with advantage be placed on the stage—on the French stage. A pretty, although a painful dilemma for a young woman to find herself in, particularly when she is passionately in love with the young man. 'Bitterly,' the accomplished story-teller would say, 'did the young widow regret the sacrifice to propriety she had made in allowing her young man to pass her off as his wife.' The accomplished story-teller would then assure his reader that the pretty American had acted precisely as a lady should act under the circumstances. But not being myself an accomplished story-teller, I will not attempt to say how a lady should act in such a situation, and it would be a fatuous thing for me to suggest that the lady was passionately in love. The situation that my fancy creates is ingenious; and I regret it did not happen. Nature spins her romances differently; and I feel sure that the lovers returned from Vincennes merely a little fluttered by their adventure. The reader would like to know if any appointment was made to meet again; if one was made it must have been for the next day or the next, for have we not imagined that the young widow's passage was already taken? Did she not tell that she was going back to America at the end of the week? 'In a few days the Atlantic will be between us,' he answered, and this fact made them feel very sad, for the Atlantic is a big thing and cannot be ignored, particularly in love affairs. It would have been better for the poet if he had accepted the *bourgeois*' invitation to dinner; friends, as I suggested, might have come in, an impromptu dance might have been arranged, or the rain might have begun again—something would certainly have happened to make them miss the train; and they would have been asked to stay the night. The widow did not

speak French, the young man did; he might have arranged it all with the *bourgeois et sa dame*, and the dear little widow might never have known her fate—O happy fate!—until the time came for them to go to their room. But he, foolish fellow, missed the chance the rain gave him, and all that came of this outing was a promise to come back next year, and to dance the Boston with him again; meanwhile he must wear her garter upon his arm. Did the suggestion that she should give him her garter come from her or from him? Was the garter given in the cab when they returned from Vincennes, or was it given the next time they met in Paris? To answer these questions would not help the story; suffice it to say that she said that the elastic would last a year, and when she took his arm and found it upon it, she would know that he had been faithful to her. There was the little handkerchief which she had given him, and this he must keep in a drawer. Perhaps some of the scent would survive this long year of separation. I am sure that she charged him to write a letter to the steamer she had taken her passage in, and, careless fellow! instead of doing so he wrote verses, and the end of all this love affair, which began so well, would be an angry letter bidding him good-bye for ever, saying he was not worthy because he had missed the post. All this happened twenty years ago: perhaps the earth is over her charming little personality, and it will be over me before long. Nothing endures; life is but change. What we call death is only change—death and life always overlapping, mixed inextricably, and no meaning in anything, merely a stream of change in which things happen. Sometimes the happenings are pleasant, sometimes unpleasant, and in neither the pleasant nor the unpleasant can we detect any purpose. Twenty long years ago, and there is no hope, not a particle.

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I have come to the end of my mood, an ache in my heart brings me to my feet, and looking round, I cry out, 'How dark is the room! Why is there no light? Bring in the lamp.'

XIII

Euphorion in Texas

'BRING IN the lamp, Agnes,' I said, 'and quickly.' And to myself as soon as she had left the room I said, 'Alas! She'll linger in the pantry, leaving me in this grey dusk, which pervades the room like a phantom.' And afraid to look round, I sat in my chair, thinking; for the dusk had started me thinking that it were stupid to retain any longer, for the sake of their beauty, my old-time lamps. A key winds up the nourishing oil with a gurgle, but the men who understood the delicate mechanism of these lamps are dead; mine are never in perfect repair, and the process of lighting them seems to be beyond the scope of Agnes's mind, for the fact, simple though it seems, has never been fully grasped by her, that after winding up the lamp she must wait till the oil overflows the burner before laying the match to the wick. 'Ah, here she is!' And I began to put questions to her, gradually eliciting the truth: Cook had wound the lamp for her, so there would be no danger of finding myself in the dark.

It is unfortunate to happen upon so imperfect an intelligence as Agnes's, but everybody has faults, we must always remember that; and with an easy mind I watched a yellow-haired, robust young woman, with enormous hips and narrow shoulders, draw grey curtains across the tall, narrow windows. The long folds seemed to me to be in keeping with the urn-shaped lamps; and in a room now lighted by fire and lamp I lay back in my arm-chair and tried to pick up the thread of

my memories, catching up an adventure at Vincennes, whither I had gone with a pretty woman at the end of the 'seventies, when white stockings were still modish. A garter and a lace handkerchief were treasured by me for many years, and the three letters that she wrote to me; but in those days no order was kept among my papers, so nothing remains of her but a name, a name which she may have changed. It seems strange that I should remember her address all through these years—17 Cathedral Street, Baltimore. But if the street has been pulled down, nothing remains of her. Baltimore is too large a town to be cherished among one's personal recollections. Besides, I have never been there. If I had gone to Baltimore I might have married her, and if I had married her my life would have been quite different. I might have gone into business. What is Baltimore celebrated for? And what has become of Marie Bruguère? Irrelevant questions of this kind elderly gentlemen are prone to ask themselves in the hour before dinner, when the parlourmaid has brought the lamp and drawn the curtains. And while considering which I should choose, were it given to me again to choose a life of love or of literature, my eyes roved over the pictures hanging upon the walls, the cabinets against the walls, and the tables and chairs spaced over the pale roses and florid architecture of Aubusson. It seemed to me that a chair hid a beautiful flower, and some finely designed sprays, but to remove the chair would interrupt my dream. 'And chairs we must have,' I said, 'though they interrupt the perfect enjoyment of an Aubusson carpet.'

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And having delivered myself of this little homily I set myself to thinking that perhaps she lay under an incised stone, and of the certain dispersal of all my beautiful furniture at Christie's in a few years—in a very few

years. My eye fell languid on the delicate proportions of a certain cabinet, 'in whose drawers,' I said, 'are stored many dozen letters, and, alas! not one from her who once lived in Cathedral Street.' She wrote few and Gabrielle wrote many; her letters are all there—all but the first, long letters of four and six and eight pages, in which she tells everything, lifts every veil. I remember her writing: 'You must make no apologies; that you are middle-aged is one of your recommendations. I really don't like young men; and that you write books is your best quality, since they are beautiful. We shall speak much of *Evelyn Innes*. The next day we shall meet in a museum, the next in a *fiacre*, and we shall take a lovely drive, and the last day you shall come to see me . . . You will like me very much, of course, because you could not dislike one of your own women. But I am very tall, and if you are not, it will irritate you.'

'How evocative,' I said, 'are those words of small, witty eyes, blonde hair, and some freckles. She writes like one whose voice is low. If I knew German I should detect her distinctly unprotestant, soft, South-German accent. Still more evocative is the letter in which she tells me that I must inscribe myself in the visitors' book as Mr. Dayne from London, and write to her as soon as I am rested. "We will talk of *Evelyn Innes*," she says in that letter, and, no doubt, if I had indulged the erethism of this exquisite Viennese, we should have talked of *Evelyn Innes*, one of the most powerful literary aphrodisiacs ever written . . . though it be little else. "As soon as you are rested you will send me a little note, in which you will tell me the number of your room, and *à quelle heure* you expect me. I then shall come at once. How nice it will be! I shall stay an hour and a half, and even if we are a little disappointed, we shall laugh a great deal, because it is amusing when a lady

comes to see a gentleman she has never seen before. Euphorion in Texas
Have you ever heard of such a funny thing?"'

A great lump of coal crumbled into ashes, and while throwing another on the fire, I reflected that the post-bag had never carried a more delightful invitation; to which, alas! I had not responded. And ever since I have been asking myself why I did not go to her. Was it because she revealed herself too completely in her letter, body and soul? Be this as it may, I did not rush to the adventure, but began, instead, a comedy in which Lewis Davenant persuades Sebastian Dayne to go to Vienna and win Gabrielle's love if he can. And it is now too late to go to her; I might as well ask her to wear one of her old hats as to love me now. Emily, too, was sacrificed to literature. In her case I feared to meet an elderly spinster who would extend a sisterly hand, saying: 'I understand you, you understand me; let us go under the willows and weep.' But she was not a spinster. Like Gabrielle, she was moved to write to me after reading *Evelyn Innes*, and her story trickles through a long correspondence, carefully tied up in packets and tucked away in a drawer in that Sheraton book-case. A pathetic story, hers seems to be, in this hour of firelight and memory. Every man's memory is a mirror of dead ladies. Emily came to Europe in her 'teens, and perforce we read the word "Fate" when she writes that she came from Australia to learn singing at Leipzig, and sat opposite her future husband the first day she took her place at *table d'hôte*. She thought she had never seen anybody that she liked less, and vowed, between the soup and fish, if she had known such a man was to sit opposite her she would have had her dinner in her room. But we cannot escape our Fate, and, despite her reluctance, the man opposite carried her away to Frankfort, where she has lived ever since, and where she has been moulded like a plant by her environment, never using her

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English except in her letters to me, yet keeping it in its purity, and telling me in a somewhat formal style that for years she was loved by a young German, whom she met every summer in a small town in Bavaria. She was then a Roman Catholic, with a sense of sin in her heart, and one day, on her way to her lover, her conscience troubled her so grievously that she stopped at a church, and, seeing an old priest, she entered his confessional and confessed much weakness of the flesh to him. 'If I am on my way to my lover,' she said, 'it is to tell him that I'll see him no more.' 'My daughter,' he answered, 'you had better not go to your lover.'

The road to the railway station lay through a wood, and she had felt that out of that wood must come a sign, a miraculous manifestation which would give her strength to resist temptation. But the wood was silent, nothing stirred in the trees, and at every station she determined to take the next train back, till at last she could stand the strain no longer, and jumped out at a little wayside station. But her lover was waiting there for her, his impatience having sent him to meet her half-way; and from that moment she knew that no divinity could prevent her from doing what she felt sure was both her wish and her will. Some phrases in her letter rose up in my mind: 'I can conceive no more perfect union than ours was, satisfying, as it did, every desire of soul, mind and body; in all the years that it lasted we never had a quarrel, not even the slightest misunderstanding; it all seemed to grow more beautiful from day to day, until even I, sceptic at heart, began to believe in the everlastingness of love.'

But one day her lover confessed to her that his conscience had awakened, and that he must begin a new life. 'He was a man,' she wrote, 'without any religious convictions at all; but now it appeared to him, all at once, that he was leading an immoral life, and with this conviction

there seemed to be born in him the wish for the legitimate joys of a bourgeois existence,' for after she had given him his freedom he married a pretty Italian governess. It was at the end of her happiness, after reading of *Evelyn Innes*, that she wrote asking me to come to Frankfort; but as I was not able to go, she went to the little Bavarian town where once she had been very happy, 'and where, freed from the cares and thoughts of home, she now meditates and remembers,' I said, 'like myself in this chair. Every year,' I added, 'she will struggle back to that little town, but the summer will come when she will lack strength to return there, preferring to remember its streets and fields by her own fireside.'

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I only just escaped meeting her; for when I was in Munich for the festival it seemed but a mere politeness to write suggesting that she should come to me or that I should go to her, but she discovered an excuse for not meeting me. 'You ask what is the matter?' she wrote. 'Well, the naked truth is that I have had a severe attack of some liver complaint, and have burnt myself so badly with a hot-water bag that I am only able to hang on my garments any sort of way. I am sure you don't want to meet such a woman. There would be no disappointment for me, of that I'm sure; whereas you, as a man, look for other qualities in a woman. You cannot, if you would, ignore the physical side of the question except in one way —by avoiding the woman, by not seeing her, letting the imagination paint her picture.' A sincere woman. It is months since I have heard from her; and it may well be that I shall never hear from her again, and it may be that we might have had some happy moments together if she had not waited till her lover had married the Italian governess. Surmise, surmise! But she was certainly right to avoid seeing me when I was in Munich. All the same, it was a pity not to have seen her, and I am sorry

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that I did not go to the inn at Toelz without warning her, putting down a false name in the visitors' book. It would have been amusing to have made her acquaintance casually in the dining-room, and to have gone for walks with her and sat with her under the same trees as she had sat under with her lover, and wheedled her into telling me all about him. A comedy unfolded in the fire, and presently another face rose up in my mind: the straight nose and clear eyes of an American poetess who did not fear that I might be disillusioned, for after a long correspondence she sent me some snapshots that a girl friend had taken of her while bathing in some brook in the Andes; and as these suggested a model that the sculptor of the *Venus de Milo* would have implored a sitting from, her letter inviting me to come to see her in Paris some two years later was welcomed. Here was the chance of seeing in the flesh one of those ladies who admired my writings, and I went to Paris, and we met—a single meeting with these last words, 'And now I cease to be a naked woman for you' —one immemorial afternoon in Paris, and since then no letter or poem. Nothing.

A sudden recollection propelled me out of my chair, and I sought her letters among the heaps in the Sheraton book-case; but there were too many for reading that evening, and coming upon a single letter in a strange handwriting, I said, 'And from whom can this be? But the handwriting is not altogether strange. I have seen it before. I have had three or four letters from her, but not more.' And returning to my chair I determined not to yield to the temptation to solve the difficulty by taking the letter out of the envelope, and sat for a long time looking into the fire. At last I cried out, 'It is she!' And my thoughts drifted away from the oath given ten years ago to the moment when Agnes, my parlourmaid, came into the room with a letter in her hand, saying that

it had just been sent round from the Shelbourne Hotel. The writer mentioned that she had come from Texas. 'A sufficiently romantic origin,' I muttered—'"And I have come to Europe in the hope of making your acquaintance." A little more abrupt than the usual letter,' I said. 'One thing, however, distinguishes her from the others. The others have proposed trysts, but this woman has come to me. She is within a few yards, almost within a stone's throw, on the other side of the Green—in the prosaic Shelbourne Hotel. But she has come from Texas.' And a great desire entered into my heart to see the lady who had written so simply, telling me that she had come from Texas, and that one of her objects in coming to Europe was to see me. It had been my pride never to accept trysts from correspondents, but I had gone to Paris, and the distance that Honor had come exceeded by tenfold the journeys that the others had invited me to undertake. Texas was many thousand miles away, and seized, perhaps, by the magnetism of the abyss over which my literature had flown, it began to seem to me that it would be mean and cowardly to refuse to see her. 'Insipid, trite, and cowardly I shall for ever be in my own eyes if I——' A sudden desire to see this lady from Texas caught me in the throat, and ringing the bell for my parlourmaid, I spoke to her with much gravity, lest she should understand the purpose of her errand. Euphorion in Texas

'You know, Agnes, that a great many people come here to see me on literary business, and the lady who sent this letter from the Shelbourne has come probably for an interview. My time is valuable just at present, and cannot be wasted on answering stupid questions; or it may be that she has come to see me about the serial or dramatic rights of my books. I want you to go to the Shelbourne, and if she should strike you as an intelligent and

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sprightly woman, who is not likely to bore me, give her this letter. I have noticed that you are a good judge of character, and her appearance will tell you much. A good description of her is what I should like; you will be a better judge than I. She will not be able to take you in!'

'And if she's an old woman, sir?'

'Then tell her I am leaving town and am very sorry. Of course, it will be a pity, Agnes, for she has come many thousands of miles, from Texas.'

'I have always heard, sir, that ladies from Texas are very rich.'

Her remark surprised me, so cheerfully was it spoken, and I watched her as she went down the pavement, evidently pleased at finding herself engaged in a romantic enterprise, one in which it is a pleasure to relate that she rose above herself, for on hearing that the lady was in, she said she would take the note upstairs herself. She was taken up in the lift. The lady answered: 'Come in,' and I remembered, smilingly, how I hearkened to Agnes's description of the lady's full shoulders, with a plait of yellow hair falling over them. 'She had her dress off, sir, and I don't think she can be more than five- or six-and-twenty. She just glanced at the letter and said that it would be all right.' During dinner Agnes continued to babble from behind my chair of to-morrow's visitor, and re-crossing my legs before the blazing fire after dinner, I ruminated the pleasures of yester-age; myself at the window waiting for my visitor was a dim picture, but myself running to the front door to open it to her was distinct, like looking into a mirror. Her first words are still loud in my ear, and my own words asking her to come upstairs. I followed her, thinking that Monet's flooded meadows, with willows rising out of the mist, would help us to get over the first five minutes. But her thoughts

were too intent on her purpose for her to consider my pictures, and she sank into a chair and sat, nervous and perturbed, looking at the pale roses and the purple architecture of the Aubusson carpet. I tried Chelsea china, but she admitted that she had never considered whether Bow was merely a rougher kind of Chelsea, and we did not get more than three minutes' conversation out of the harpsichord in the next room; Purcell's *Golden Sonata* was a failure, and I remembered how I had said to myself, 'Let us try literature,' and calling her attention to the original edition of *The Human Comedy* in the book-case, I took down a volume.

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'Your books,' she said, 'have meant more to me than any other writer.'

To put her at her ease I asked her which work she preferred, expecting her to say *Evelyn Innes*, but it was *Sister Teresa* that had awakened her interest in me, and with curiosity quickening every moment in my visitor, I begged her to tell me her story, and learnt that she had decided to become a nun when she was eighteen, and had passed through the novitiate and taken the white veil before she discovered that she had no vocation for religion. It was difficult to bring her to speak of the convent, and lest I might annoy her by pursuing the subject too assiduously, I contented myself with remarking that the greatest romance of all is when a man or woman says in early life, 'I will abjure life; I will forswear it and put my faith in Heaven.' An angry sourness in her voice announced that her hatred of the convent had deepened considerably since she left it, and to soften her temper, I added: 'Or else when, after the novitiate, or after taking the vows, the nun or monk says, "This life is not for me," and crosses the threshold of the convent into the open air, and walks into the fields and hearkens to the little birds singing in the shaws.' My little exordium did not seem to

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interest her as I hoped it would; she merely muttered that she hated to remember that two good years of her life were wasted among nuns.

'We will speak of something else,' I said; 'but remember it was *Sister Teresa* that you liked more than any other book.'

I should have liked to verify my foreseeing through her, but she would not talk of the convent, and all I could gather was that she held it in detestation. So my imagination began at once to weave an intrigue with a priest, but rejecting this very simple hypothesis as unlikely, and clinging to the hope that a vague sense of sex had led her out of it, I reminded her that it had been said that God only gets the women that men do not want, to which aphorism she made but little answer; whereupon it became plain to me that my endeavour should be to produce inveigling talk, laying stress on the fact that our life can only be given to us for one thing—to live it; the first of our instincts is sex, therefore for a woman to love a man and to sacrifice herself is her duty, just as a man's duty is to sacrifice himself for a woman. My efforts were rewarded: she seemed to welcome the turn the conversation was taking; her face became animated, she listened, pleased for a while, and then her face clouded, and shyly she confessed to me that she had been attracted to men since she had left the convent. She even hinted at a love-story—an ordinary one it seemed to be; she had discovered him to be unworthy in time.

'But I cannot speak of that. Why do you——'

It was necessary, I felt, to change the conversation, and the plains of Texas started up in my mind, with endless cowboys scurrying for ever after wild cattle, and I invited her to tell me if she had whirled a lasso or enwound the hind legs of a heifer with a bolas. But

the sum of her knowledge of Texas was Austin—a disappointing admission I felt it to be, having conceived Texas as plains with huts out of which men emerged to spring on horses and fire revolvers. But instructed by my visitor, I learnt that Austin is a large town. She and her sisters, after finding themselves destitute, had dealt in general goods until they had possessed themselves of another fortune. Our talk became pleasant suddenly, and I learnt that my visitor's name was Honor, and that neither of her two sisters was endowed with any remarkable intelligence; one was a good saleswoman, but a bad buyer. Her second sister was a great trial, and it was partly on account of her second sister that she decided to leave the business and spend the money she had made on a visit to Europe. It took a long time to entice her out of her reserve, and it was at the end of a long talk regarding the folly of wasting one's life piling up money, that I learnt that Honor was not married. The reason she gave me for her celibacy seemed a little trite, and I began to dread a moralist. 'Once,' she said, 'a woman decides to marry she must think of the children she may bring into the world.' 'The store,' I dared to suggest as a career for the children that might come, a suggestion which seemed to displease her amazingly, and I heard her say that for a woman to throw herself into the arms of a man for her pleasure, and bring children into the world infirm in mind and body, was reprehensible. She admitted that she desired intellectual companionship: she could not love a stupid man, and in a primitive place like Texas a woman who chose to have a child except in wedlock would be misunderstood. Nor had she seen a man in Texas worthy to be the father of her child. The child she desired was an exceptional child, a man of talent, a painter, a poet, a musician.

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'A musician!' I cried, and we spoke of *The Ring*, but,

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despite my praise of it, she inclined more to literature than to music.

'Have you ever met a man of letters who——'

It is not unlikely that this sentence was never finished, if it were I have forgotten how it ended, but remember well how strained and difficult the conversation became. We began to pick our words, myself asking timorously if a potential father for her son had ever taken shape in her mind. She raised her eyes to mine, and then, like one speaking out of her deeper self, stirred a little by a sudden thought, a wind upon the water, she said :—

'I have never thought of anybody definitely, only that I would like to give Texas a literature ; and when I read your books——'

'You thought of me ?'

She had paid me the compliment of thinking of me as a possible father for her son, as a man who was likely to beget a son who would give a literature to Texas ; and my curiosity now enkindled as it had never been before, and as it will never be again, I asked her how the idea of giving Texas a literature worthy of its name had come to her, and if her knowledge of me was purely literary, acquired from reading my books.

'You didn't know, for instance, that my age might preclude the possibility——'

She answered quite simply that she had thought a great deal on that question before setting out for Europe, and then, speaking with still greater diffidence, I said :—

'But you must have asked yourself if you would find a man in me whose appearance was not too distasteful, a distaste which you might not be able to overcome, despite the desire to render a great service to your country.'

'I often thought of that on board the steamer.'

Another question had to be put, the most delicate of all, and I said :—

'Am I to understand that my appearance is not distasteful to you?'

'No, I don't think you distasteful.'

At these words a certain imminence seemed to come into the room, and we sat silent, myself seeking for words with desperate eagerness and not finding any, all seemed inadequate. To thank her for her good opinion of me could not do else than to exhibit me in a prosaic light. I must cross the room boldly and kiss her or plead a pressing engagement, a daring expedient and a vulgar one in ordinary circumstances, but our circumstances were not ordinary. 'All things considered, it isn't likely that she will refuse,' I said to myself, and it was in a hopeful mood that I rose out of my chair. But she rose out of hers at the same moment, and lifting her face, which seemed young and beautiful (I say seemed, for she stood with her back to the light), she extended a frank and fearless hand.

'I must be going now. I'm afraid I have taken up a great deal of your valuable time, and I thank you very cordially for having received me.'

'But I hope I shall have the pleasure of receiving you again. I am engaged this evening, but I shall be pleased if you will come to dinner to-morrow night.'

'I shall be delighted to dine with you.'

And upon these words she passed gracefully and with dignity out of the room, leaving me asking myself whether the strange fortune that had befallen me were for good or evil. 'She is an American, right enough,' I answered. 'But why did she make application to me rather than to Meredith, Swinburne, Yeats, Henry James, or Gosse? Gosse is the leading spirit of the English academy, and his love for literature is pure and disinterested; he could not

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refuse to—— Something in my writings must have appealed to her. Not my style, nor the subjects I choose, but a certain pervading intimacy which I do not seek, but of which I am conscious. And that is why I was chosen instead of Gosse. A very strange and original episode, no doubt, one that a writer of tact would place in the fifteenth century—1430, or thereabouts; perhaps some hundreds of years further back—a story quite out of keeping with the genius of the twentieth century. It would be quite all right if the lady had sent me one of my books to write her name in; and quite all right if she had brought me the manuscript of a novel and begged me to advise her about the plot. She might have even gone further and come here with an idea for a play or a story and invited my collaboration. But to come here and invite my collaboration in—— A thought like hers rises high above the base conventionalities and the tawdry desires of the ordinary man and woman who merely seek gratifications pecuniary or sexual. We do not know the motive that prompted Bettina to go to Goethe. The nearest thing in literature to my own case is to be found in *The Confessions*, when Madame de Warens takes Jean Jacques into the garden and confides to him that he has arrived at man's estate. She does not solicit his favours, but just proposes herself in amiable fashion, telling him that he need not hurry himself to come to a decision. She gives him eight days to consider it, and the few lines in which he describes the episode are perhaps the most truly original in literature. But the episode, so marvellously presented in *The Confessions*, presents no analogy to my own case. Madame Warens is a widow, whereas Honor might be a virgin. If the unconventional errand she had come to Europe upon be not taken into account, there was nothing to lead me to suppose she was not, and I had invited her to dine with me to-morrow. In the circumstances dinner meant . . .

'Good Heavens!' I cried. 'What have I not let myself Euphorion in Texas
in for? A woman whom I have never seen or heard of before, with whose appearance I am but imperfectly acquainted. She certainly struck me as young and attractive, but the morning was dark, there was some fog in the street, she wore a large hat, and sat all the time with her back to the light. True, it was I who had indicated that chair to her. But why did she get up to go the moment I crossed the room? She must have guessed that I rose to kiss her. But, after all, if her desire to give a literature to her country be a real one, she must know that a kiss is preliminary to the literature.'

A hundred different decisions formed in my mind and melted into nothingness—a sudden need to see my agent, an attack of influenza. Innumerable letters were composed; one was written, but it was not sent. And while all this mental torment was spending itself, I was sustained by my natural and inveterate desire of the strange, the odd, the bizarre. All my other love affairs were commonplace compared to this one, a literary love *par excellence*, to which the loves of Musset and George Sand were shallow and without perspective, love-stories in two dimensions; whereas this is one in three, and if Texas is considered, in four. With such thoughts did I while away the hours that divided us, and as the hour approached, the pangs of hope grew tenser; a hundred times I asked myself if I had made myself clear; and I was about to send over to the Shelbourne to inquire, when she arrived, beautiful beyond my expectations—*la symphonie en blanc majeur en personne.* As not one of Gautier's similes occurred to me on seeing her, I will not quote, but will try to recall instead the sensations that her snow-coloured forehead awakened in me, a forehead round and high, with pale gold curls about it, and a flush of the tenderest rose breaking through the snow of

her cheeks. Her eyes were the palest blue, yet it seemed to me that I had never seen blue eyes before, and during dinner I watched her snow-coloured hands, lit with pink, almond-shaped nails, while seeking to save the conversation from dropping, a difficult task, for Agnes hardly ever left the room. My visitor seemed to speak from the Alpine altitudes. Now and again a pleasant smile floated over her wonderful face, and her remarks, though simple, were never trivial or silly. 'A little unbending,' I said to myself, and began to doubt the evidence of my ears. Seeing her eating and talking to me so calmly, it seemed impossible to believe that yesterday she had asked me to enable her to give a literature to Texas. It would be too much to hope that she would undertake the good office of breaking the ice herself and, feeling myself deplorably unequal to the task, I followed her upstairs. It seemed impossible to believe that she would ever submit herself to human love. She seemed so much beyond and above it. Perhaps she was ignorant of human love, and believed that a child could be produced by spells and incantations. The five minutes in the drawing-room before Agnes brought up the coffee were an agony, and when she did bring it up she took an incredible time to hand it round. At last the door closed behind her. A dryness came into my throat. It seemed to me that I could never think of anything to say again. The floor seemed to slide beneath my feet when I tried to walk across the room, and several times I changed my chair. My eyes were all the time fixed on the beautiful white forehead. After all, it could not shock her—offend her too utterly and absolutely—if I were to lean over and kiss her on the point of her shoulder. That was how she would like me to break the ice; but instead of kissing her immaculate forehead, I stood by her talking of the pictures in which I had seen her face.

'There is Bronzino.'

She raised her seraphic eyes to mine, and my talk died in my throat. But fortunately my hand dropped on her knee. She withdrew her knee instantly, and I seemed to myself an incredible ruffian, and was about to apologise for my hand when her look changed. Euphorion in Texas

'I beg your pardon,' she said, 'for withdrawing my knee. You see I replace it. I don't want you to think me a little fool.'

Well, the dread moment was over and passed, and she seemed to become suddenly interpenetrated with a wonderful tenderness, not love, as we use the word, but some deep feeling of union and sense of destiny and duty seemed to animate her—a feeling easier to attribute to a Hindoo than to a Northern woman. But next evening in the drawing-room as I rose from my chair to go to her she almost rushed forward to meet me, and a few minutes after she was kneeling in my black satin arm-chair, her face leaned against the back, a beautiful pose, showing her pale golden hair drawn up into a knot and fastened with a large tortoiseshell comb, polished so highly that I could see myself in it as I bent over, and, drawing her face up to mine, tasted the nectar of her tongue.

Manet's white is the rarest, he alone can endow the breast blossom with a pink that shames a peony, but Manet's white is mundane, and Honor's whiteness always seemed benedictive and immortal. Bronzino's *Venus* is whiter than sea-foam, but she is vain and frivolous. Francesca attained to a saintly whiteness, and as we walked through the hot September night to her hotel, Honor became intimately associated in my mind with the genius of that painter.

'You'll allow me to come to see you again?' she said, stopping at the corner of the Green.

'But why do you ask? Is it because you doubt, or have you not been well received?'

'I'll not pretend that the evenings I spend with you are not agreeable, and you will forgive me if my thoughts are always a little ahead.'

'But, Honor, literature was but a pretext in enchanting fantasy.'

'Besides, I must not interrupt your work.'

Her seriousness perplexed me, and looking back on the episode after many years, it does not seem to me that I met her more than seven or eight times during the six weeks she spent in Dublin—ten times at the most. Once there was an interval of a week and, alarmed, I sent round to the Shelbourne to inquire, receiving in reply a gracious note that she would be glad to dine with me. Once, and only once, did I persuade her to go for a walk. She wished to see the Dublin mountains, and we went out Rathfarnham way and wandered about the banks of the Dodder river, and returned home talking of the old farm-house we had seen, built out of great cut-stone some two hundred and fifty years ago. She stayed later that evening than was her wont, and it was then that I perceived that, however much I might strain her in my arms, we were apart. Something wider than the Atlantic divided us. Only once, when she came to bid me good-bye, did she seem to descend into the area of human feelings.

'I am sorry to leave you, for you have been throughout very kind, the very man that I had expected from your books.'

'But it is not true that you are leaving me?' And, frightened by her calm eyes, I added: 'It is not true that I shall never kiss these snow-coloured hands again?'

'There is no reason why you should kiss them now,' she answered, withdrawing her hands. 'Why make this parting more difficult? Why force me to speak words that hurt me to speak? The end for which we met is accomplished.'

'All the more reason that I should insist on retaining you.' Euphorion in Texas

'You wouldn't have me sacrifice the mission that brought me here for the emotion of a moment?'

'Of a moment!'

'You're not sure that you will think to-morrow as you do to-day. Even so, it is certain that sooner or later you will think differently. If you had not known how to sacrifice certain emotional moments so that you might follow this path that Fate had traced for you, I should not be here to-day. You would have me believe that it would be as well if I had never come? But I know you are merely trying to think that you are sorry you ever saw me, and that I have blighted your life. You will return to your writing to-morrow. You love it better than you can ever love me, and your heart would fail you if I were to throw aside my furs and say: "I'll stay." You would despise me. Yes, yes, I should become in your eyes the mere traditional woman without a mission, career, or destination.'

It seems to me that I remember her speech perfectly, and her smooth musical voice still haunts in my ears when the room is lighted by firelight and lamp.

'The seed must never know whence it came,' she said. 'We must both sacrifice something for our child. I am sacrificing the common respect of society in Texas, and you must forgo all knowledge of your boy. Your name has been too intimately associated with art and literature. Swear.'

'I swear,' and we spent our last evening crooning names over the fire in Ely Place, for it was necessary to discover a name that would go with Honor's surname. At last one flamed up in my mind—a name more likely to inspire painting than poetry.

'But how do you know our child will be a boy?'

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Always sure of herself, she smiled and went away, and this letter announcing his birth is all I have. Were it not for this letter her visit might have been a dream of yester-night.

'And now I'll doze an hour in this comfortable arm-chair, and dream that I am on my way to Texas to seek out Honor and her boy.'

XIV

Sunday Evening in London

MARRIED FOLK always know, only the bachelor asks, 'Where shall I dine? Shall I spend two shillings in a chop-house, or five in my club, or ten at the Café Royal?' For two or three more shillings one may sit on the balcony of the Savoy, facing the spectacle of evening darkening on the river, with lights of bridge and wharf and warehouse afloat in the tide. Married folk know their bedfellows; bachelors, and perhaps spinsters, are not so sure of theirs: this is a side issue which we will not pursue; an allusion to it will be enough to bring before the reader the radical difference between the lives of the married and the unmarried. Oh, married ones, from breakfast to six only do our lives resemble yours! At that hour we begin to experience a sense of freedom and, I confess it, of loneliness. It is true that life is essentially a lonely thing, and the married and the unmarried differ only in this, that we are lonely when we are by ourselves, and they are lonely when they are together.

At half-past six the bachelor has to tidy up after the day's work, to put his picture away if he be a painter, to put his writings away if he be a writer, and then the very serious question comes, with whom shall he dine? His thoughts fly through Belgravia and Mayfair, and after whisking round Portman Square, and some other

square in the northern neighbourhood, they soar and go away northward to Regent's Park, seeking out somebody living in one of these stately terraces who will ask him to stay to dinner. At So-and-so's there is always a round of beef, and cold chicken-pie, whereas What-do-you-call-them's begin with soup. But the food is not of much consequence; an interesting company is his search. Sunday Evening in London

It was last week that I realised, and for the first time, how different was the life of the married from the unmarried. The day was Sunday, and I had been writing all day, and in the hush that begins about six o'clock I remembered that I was without a dinner engagement. The cup of tea I generally take about half-past four had enabled me to do another hour's work, but a little after six sentences refused to form themselves, a little dizziness began in the brain, and the question not only 'Where shall I dine?' but 'Where shall I pass the hour before dinner?' presented itself. The first thing to do was to dress, and while dressing I remembered that I had not wandered in St. James's Park for some time, and that that park had fascinated me since boyhood. St. James's Park and the Green Park have never been divided in my admiration of their beauty. The trees that grow along the Piccadilly railings are more beautiful in St. James's Park, or seem so, for the dells are well designed. The art of landscape gardening is more akin to the art of a musician than to that of a painter; it is a sort of architecture with colour added. The formal landscape gardening of Versailles reminds us of a tragedy by Racine, but the romantic modulations of the green hills along the Piccadilly areas are as enchanting as Haydn. There was a time when a boy used to walk from Brompton to Piccadilly to see, not the dells, but the women going home from the Argyle Rooms and the Alhambra, but after a slight hesitation he often crossed from the

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frequented to the silent side, to stand in admiration of the white rays of moonlight stealing between the trunks of the trees. The trees grow so beautifully about these mounds, and upon the mounds, that it is easy to fill the interspaces with figures from Gainsborough's pictures, ladies in hoops and powdered hair, elegant gentlemen wearing buckled shoes, tail-coats, and the swords which made them gentlemen. Gainsborough did not make his gentlemen plead—that was his insular coldness, whereas Watteau's ladies put their fans to their lips archly, asking the pleading lover if he believes all he says, knowing well that his vows are only part of the gracious entertainment. But why did not the great designer of St. James's Park build little Greek temples—those pillared and domed temples which give such grace to English parks? Perhaps the great artist who laid out the Green Park was a moralist and a seer, and divining the stream of ladies that come up from Brompton to Piccadilly, he thought—well, well, his thoughts were his own, and now the earth is over him, as Rossetti would say.

Five-and-twenty years ago the white rays slanted between the tree-trunks, and the interspaces lengthened out, disappearing in illusive lights and shades, and, ascending the hill, the boy used to look over the empty plain, wondering at the lights of the Horse Guards shining far away like a village. Perhaps to-night, about midnight, I may find myself in Piccadilly again, for we change very little; what interested us in our youth interests us almost to the end. St. James's Park is perhaps more beautiful in the sunset—there is the lake, and, led by remembrance of some sunsets I had seen on it, I turned out of Victoria Street last Sunday, taking the eastern gate, my thoughts occupied with beautiful Nature, seeing in imagination the shapes of the trees designing themselves grandly against the sky, and the little life of the ponds—the ducks going

hither and thither, every duck intent upon its own business and its own desire. I was extremely fortunate, for the effect of light in the Green Park was more beautiful last Sunday than anything I had ever seen; the branches of the tall plane-trees hung over the greensward, the deciduous foliage hardly stirring in the pale sunshine, and my heart went out to the ceremonious and cynical garden, artificial as eighteenth-century couplets. Wild Nature repels me; and I thought how interesting it was to consider oneself, to ponder one's sympathies; our antipathies are not quite so interesting to consider, but they are interesting too, in a way, for they belong to oneself, and self is man's main business; all outside of self is uncertain, all comes from self, all returns to self; and the reason I desired St. James's Park last Sunday was surely because it is part of me, not that part known to my friends—our friends understand only those margins of themselves which they discover in us; we are never understood, and it has always been one of my sorest regrets that I never met anybody who discovered for himself or herself that I loved trees better than flowers, or was much interested in the fact when, in despair, I called attention to it. Sunday Evening in London

I watch trees and never weary of their moods—solemn, silent and strangely green in the long, rainy days, feverishly excited when a breeze is blowing—like frivolous girls in fine weather. And in their decline they are beautiful, more beautiful than flowers, and I shall never forget last Sunday's loveliness, the long branches hanging out of the tall, stately plane-trees like plumes; in the hush of sound and decline of light the droop of the deciduous foliage spoke like a memory; I seemed to hear eighteenth-century voices, and turned aside from a certain glade, Watteau having painted it. But in what picture? It is difficult to say, so easily do his pictures flow one into the

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other, always the melancholy of festival, the pain in the heart, the yearning for the beyond which all suffer whose business in life is to wear painted or embroidered dresses, and to listen or to plead with this for sole variation, that they who listen to-day will plead to-morrow—a literary painter who divined the sorrow of them who sit under colonnades, always playing some part, great or small, in love's comedy, listening to the murmur of the fountain, watching a gentleman and lady advancing and bowing, bowing and retiring, dancing a pavan on a richly-coloured carpet.

As the twilight gathered under the plane-trees my vision became more mixed and morbid, and I hardly knew if the picture I saw was the one in the Dulwich Gallery, or the "Assemblée dans un Parc" in the Louvre, the gallants and the ladies by the waterside, and the blue evening showing through the tall trees. The picture before me was like that picture, only the placing of the trees and the shelving of the greensward did not admit of so extended a composition. A rough tree-trunk, from which a great branch was broken or lopped off, stood out suddenly in very nineteenth-century naturalness, awaking the ghost of a picture which I recognised at once as Corot. Behind the tree a tender, evanescent sky, pure and transparent as the very heart of a flower, rose up, filling the park with romance, and as the sunset drooped upon the water my soul said, 'The lake!' Ah, the pensive shadow that falls from the hills on either side of "the lake," leaving the middle of the picture suffused with a long stream of light, narrowing as it approached the low horizon. But the line of the trees on the hither side of this London lake was heavier than the spiritual trees in the picture entitled, "By the Water-side," and there was not anywhere the beauty of the broken birch that leans over the lake in "Le Lac de Garde." And then I thought

of "The Ravine," for the darkening island reminded me of the hillside in the picture. But the St. James's Park sky lacked the refined concentration of light in "The Ravine," so beautifully placed, low down in the picture, behind some dark branches jutting from the right, the difference between Nature and Corot striking me as greater than the difference between a true and a false Corot—not that there is anything untrue in Nature, only Nature lacks personality, and is therefore often a little vulgar, especially in her sunsets, as Whistler remarked. Sunday Evening in London

So did I chatter to myself as I walked towards the bridge, that dear bridge, thrown straight as a plank across the lake, with numerous water-fowl collected there, a black swan driving the ducks about, snatching more than his due share of bread, and little children staring stolidly, afraid of the swan, and constantly reproved by their mothers for reasons which must always seem obscure to the bachelor. A little breeze was blowing, and the ducks bobbed like corks in the waves, keeping themselves in place with graceful side-strokes of their webbed feet. Sometimes the ducks rose from the water and flew round the trees by Queen Anne's Mansions, or they fled down the lake with outstretched necks, like ducks on a Japanese fan, dropping at last into the water by the darkening island, leaving behind long silver lines, which the night instantly obliterated—an impression of passing away, of the effacement of individual life.

One sighs, for it is even so that life passes, sunrise after sunrise, moonlight upon moonlight, evening upon evening, and we like May-flies on the surface of a stream, no more than they, for all our poets and priests.

The clock struck seven, reminding me of the dinner-hour, and that I should have to dine alone that evening. To avoid dining alone I should have left St. James's Park earlier, but if I had not lingered I should have missed

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an exquisite hour of meditation, and meditations are as necessary to some as absinthe is to others. A little incident was, however, wanting—a meeting with one whom one has not seen for a long time, a man or a woman, it would not matter which, a peg whereon to hang the description of the dusk among the trees. I walked in hope, almost in expectation, but nothing happened till I reached the threshold of St. James's Street, when a young man, a painter, one whose pictures interested me sometimes, appeared, and we went to a restaurant to talk art.

'After dinner,' I said, 'we will get the best cigars and walk about the Circus. Every Sunday night it is crowded; we shall see the women hurrying to and fro on love's quest. The warm night will bring them all out in white dresses, and a white dress in the moonlight is compelling. Don't you like the feather boas reaching almost to the ground? I do. Lights-of-love going about their business interest me extraordinarily, for they, and the tinkers and gipsies, are the last that remain of the old world when outlawry was common. Now we are all socialists, more or less occupied with the performance of duties which get everybody's approval. Methinks it is a relief to know that somebody lives out of society, obedient to his instinct. I like all this London, this midnight London, when the round moon rises above the gracious line of Regent Street, and flaming Jupiter soars like a hawk, following some quest of his own—we on our little, he on his greater quest.'

. . . . . .

The night was hot and breathless, like a fume, and upon a great silken sky the circular and sonorous street wheeled like an amphitheatre. I threw open my light overcoat, and seizing the arm of my friend, I said:—

'He reminds me of a Turk lying amid houris. The gnawing, creeping sensualities of his phrase—his one

phrase—how descriptive it is of the form and whiteness of a shoulder, the supple fulness of the arm's muscle, the brightness of eyes increased by kohl! Scent is burning on silver dishes, and through the fumes appear the subdued colours of embroidered stuffs and the inscrutable traceries of bronze lamps.' Or, maybe, the scene passes on a terrace overlooking a dark river. Behind the domes and minarets a yellow moon dreams like an odalisque, her hand on the circle of her breast; and through the torrid silence of the garden, through the odour of over-ripe fruit and the falling sound thereof, comes the melancholy warble of a fountain. Or is it the sorrow of lilies rising through the languid air to the sky? The night is blue and breathless; the spasms of the lightning are intermittent among the minarets and the domes; the hot, fierce fever of the garden waxes in the almond scent of peaches, and the white odalisques advancing, sleek oracles of mood. He reminds me of the dark-eyed Bohemian who comes into a tavern silently, and, standing in a corner, plays long, wild, ravishing strains. I see him not, I hardly hear him, my thoughts are far away; my soul slumbers, desiring only that the spell laid upon me may not be broken. But I feel his dark eyes upon me, and little by little, in spite of my will, my senses awake; a strange germination is in progress within me; thoughts and desires that I dread, whose existence in myself I was not aware of, whose existence in myself I would fain deny, come swiftly and come slowly, and settle and absorb and become part of me. Fear is upon me, but I may not pause; I am hurried on; repudiation is impossible; supplication and the wringing of hands are vain; God has forsaken me; my worst nature is uppermost. I see it floating up from the depths of my being, a viscous scum. But I can do nothing to check or control. God has forsaken me. I am the prey to that dark, sensual-eyed Bohemian and

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his abominable fiddle; and seizing my bank-notes, my gold and my silver, I throw him all I have. I bid him cease, and fall back exhausted. Give me *The Ring*, give me *The Ring*. Its cloud palaces, its sea-caves and forests, and the animality therein, its giants and dwarfs and sirens, its mankind and its godkind—it is surely nearer to life! Or let me go into the meadows with Beethoven, and listen to the lark and the blackbird! We are nearer life lying by a shady brook, hearing the quail in the meadows and the yellow-hammer in the thicket, than we are now, under this oppressive sky. This street is like Klingsor's garden; here, too, are flower maidens —patchouli, jessamine, violet. Here is the languorous atmosphere of *Parsifal*. Come, let us go; let us seek the country, the moon-haunted dells we shall see through Piccadilly railings. Have you ever stood in the dip of Piccadilly and watched the moonlight among the trees, and imagined a comedy by Wycherly acted there, a goodly company of gallants and fine ladies seated under the trees watching while late ones continue to arrive in painted sedan-chairs. Now all are in their places, and the chair-bearers have gathered into a group at a little distance.

'My dear friend, you're talking so much that you don't see those who are passing us; that girl, she who has just turned to look back, favours heliotrope; it is delicious still upon the air; she is as pretty a girl as any that ever came in a sedan-chair to see a comedy by Wycherly. The comedy varies very little: it is always the same comedy, and it is always interesting. The Circus in a sultry summer night under a full moon is very like Klingsor's garden. Come, if you be not Parsifal.'

XV

I WAS IN London when my brother wrote telling me that mother was ill. She was not in any immediate danger, he said, but if a change for the worse were to take place, and it were necessary for me to come over, he would send a telegram. A few hours after a telegram was handed to me. It contained four words, *Come at once.—Maurice.* 'So mother is dying,' I muttered to myself, and I stood thoughtless, foreseeing myself taken into her room by a nurse, and given a chair by the bedside, foreseeing a hand lying outside the bed which I should have to hold until I heard the death-rattle and saw her face become quiet for ever. Resurgam

This was my first vision, but in the midst of my packing I remembered that mother might linger for days; the dear friend who lies in the churchyard under the Downs lingered for weeks; every day her husband and her children saw her dying under their eyes: why should not this misfortune be mine? I know not to what God, but I prayed all night in the train, and on board the boat; I got into the train at the Broadstone praying. But to the journey. How shall I tell it? The third part must have been the most painful, so clearly do I remember it; the curious agony of mind caused by a sudden recognition of objects long forgotten—a tree or a bit of bog land. The familiar country carried my thoughts hither and thither through my childhood. My thoughts ranged like the swallows; the birds had, no doubt, just arrived, and in swift elliptical flights they hunted for gnats along the banks of the old weedy canal. That weedy canal along which the train travelled took my thoughts back to the very beginning of my life, when I stood at the carriage window and plagued my father and mother with questions regarding the life of

Resurgam the barges passing up and down. And it was the sudden awakenings from these memories that were so terrible; the sudden thrust of the thought that I was going westward to see my mother die, and that nothing could save her from death or me from seeing her die. 'Nothing,' I said, 'can save me unless I get out at the next station,' and I imagined myself taking a car and driving anywhither, far from Moore Hall. But for such an act I would be looked upon as a madman: 'One is bound on a wheel,' I muttered, and I began to think that men under sentence of death must often wonder why they were selected especially for such a fate, and the mystery, the riddle of it all, must be perhaps the greatest part of their pain; and of all if the morning be beautiful. The morning I journeyed to Mayo was one of the most beautiful I had ever seen, and I often caught myself seeking a picturesque expression to describe it (we may not tether our thoughts). It seemed to me that the earth might be compared to an egg, it looked so warm under a white sky, soft as the breast-feathers of a dove. This sudden appearance of literature at bay made me feel that I wanted to kick myself. A moment afterwards I found myself meditating on the difficulty of keeping my thoughts fixed on any one subject for any length of time; and at the end of this meditation I fell back, wondering, asking myself if it were really my lot to watch by my mother's deathbed; and then it struck me that I seemed to have become a mere mentality, a buzz of thought, and for an image it behoved me to think of a fly climbing and falling back, buzzing, and climbing again. 'Never,' I said to myself, 'have I been more than a fly buzzing in a glass dome. But who made the glass dome? and why was it made? The cruelty of Nero outdone,' I said.

In such sore perplexity, questions from anybody would be intolerable, and I shrank back into the corner of the

carriage whenever a passer-by reminded me, however vaguely, of anybody I had ever known, and the mental strain increased mile after mile, the names of the stations becoming more and more familiar as the train proceeded into the western country. At Roscommon I was trying to remember how many there were before we arrived at Claremorris, the station at which I was going to alight, for the train did not stop at Balla. An hour later, mayhap, the train slackened, the porter cried out 'Ballyhaunnis,' the next would be Claremorris, and I watched every field, foreseeing the long road, myself on one side of the car, the driver on the other; a two hours' drive in silence or in talk—in talk, for he might be able to tell me about my mother, if the news of her illness had reached as far as Claremorris. Resurgam

At the public-house where I went to get a car I made inquiries, but nothing was known. My mother must have fallen ill suddenly—of what? I had not heard she was ailing; I did not remember her to have been ill. The car came, and we drove through the summer weather up and down the starveling roads of Mayo till at last some trees reminded me that we were close to Ballyglass, and my thoughts wandered away to the long road on the other side of the hill, and I saw there (for do we not often see things in memory as plainly as if they were before us?) the two cream-coloured ponies, Ivory and Primrose, that mother used to drive, and the phaeton, and myself in it, a little child in frocks, anxious above all things to see the mail-coach go by. For a great sight it was to see it go by, with mail-bags and luggage, the guard blowing a horn, the horses trotting splendidly, the lengthy reins swinging, and the driver, his head leaned a little on one side to save his hat, a grey beaver, from being blown away. The great event of those years was the day that we went to Ballyglass, not to see the coach go by, but to get into it, for in

Resurgam those days the railway stopped at Athenry. That was the day I saw the canal, and heard with astonishment that there was a time long ago, no doubt in my father's youth, when people went to Dublin in a barge. And on awaking from these memories I saw that not more than two and a half miles lay between me and Moore Hall. 'In half an hour more I shall know whether she be alive or dead,' I said, 'and I watched the horse trotting, interested in his shambling gait, or not at all interested in it—I do not know which. On occasions of great nervous tension one observes everything; now it was a wood, a while afterwards somebody's farmyard, later on a line of cottages, another wood, and then one of my own gate lodges. An old sawyer lives in it now—looking after it for me; and I hoped that the wheels of the car would not bring him out, for it would distress me to see him.

The firs in the low-lying land had grown a little within the last thirty years, but not much. We came to the bridge; we left it behind us; we reached the gate lodge and entered the drive; the woods that I knew so well unfolded before me. Good Heavens! how terrible was all this resurrection! The present hides the past; but there are times when the present does not exist at all, when every mist is cleared away, and the past confronts us in naked outline. The little hill at the beginning of the drive is but a little hill, but to me it is much more, so intimately is it associated with all the pains and troubles of childhood. All this part was once a fairyland to me; now it is but a thin reality, a book which I have read, and the very thought of which bores me, so well do I know it. There is the lilac-bush! I used to go to it with my mother thirty years ago at this time of year, and we returned home with our hands full of bloom. Two more turnings and we should be within sight of the house! This is how men feel when condemned to death. I am

sure of it. The two beautiful laburnums on the crest of the hill are now mere wreckage, I saw, and asked the driver to urge his horse up the hill, for I saw some peasants about the steps of the hall door; they were waiting, no doubt, for news, or perhaps they had news. 'We have bad news for you,' they cried in the wailing tones of the West. Resurgam

'Not altogether bad news,' I said to myself; 'my mother is dead, but I have been saved the useless pain, the torture of spirit I should have endured if I had arrived in time.' China roses used to grow over the railings, and I noticed a few blooms as I ran up the high steps, asking myself why I could not put the past behind me: for if ever there was a time to live in the present, this was one; but never was the present further from me and the past clearer than when I opened the hall door and stood in the hall, paved with grey stones and painted grey and blue. Three generations had played in it; in that corner I learned to spin my first top, and I kept on trying, showing a perseverance that amazed my father. He said, 'If George shows as much perseverance in other things as he does in the spinning of a top he will not fail.' He used to catch me trying and trying to spin that top when he came downstairs on his way to the stables to see his beloved racehorses 'And that is the very chair,' I said, 'on which he put his hat and gloves.' In those days tall hats were worn in the country, and it was the business of his valet to keep them well brushed, and I remembered how the little old man used to watch me, objecting in a way to my spinning my top in the hall, fearful lest I should overturn the chair on which the hat stood: sometimes that did happen, and then, oh dear!

In search of somebody I opened the drawing-room door. My sister was there, weeping for our mother, who died

Resurgam that morning. We are so constituted that we demand outward signs of our emotions, especially of grief; we are doubtful of its genuineness unless it is accompanied by sighs and tears; and that, I suppose, is why my sister's tears were welcomed by me, for, truth to tell, I was a little shocked at my own insensibility. This was stupid of me, for I knew through experience that we do not begin to suffer immediately after the accident; everything takes time, grief as well as pain. But in a moment so awful as the one I am describing, one does not reflect, one falls back on the convention that grief and tears are inseparable as fire and smoke. If I could not weep, it were well that my sister could, and I accepted her tears as a tribute paid to our mother's goodness—a goodness which never failed, for it was instinctive. It even seemed to me a pity that Nina had to dry her eyes so that she might tell me the sad facts—when mother died, of her illness, and the specialist who had not arrived in time. I learned that some one had blundered—not that that mattered much, for mother would not have submitted to an operation.

While listening to her, I unwittingly remembered how we talked of the dear woman whose funeral I described in the pages entitled "A Remembrance." We used to talk, her daughters and her son and her husband and I talked of her who was dying upstairs—we were greatly moved, I at least appreciated my love of her—yet our talk would drift from her suddenly, and we would speak of indifferent things, or maybe the butler would arrive to tell us lunch was ready. How these incidents jar our finer feelings! they seem to degrade life, and to such a point that we are ashamed of living, and are tempted to regard life itself as a disgrace.

I foresaw that the same interruptions, the same divagations would happen among ourselves, in the square

Georgian house standing on a hill-top overlooking a long winding lake, as had happened among my friends in the Italian house under the Downs amid bunches of evergreen oaks. And I had not to wait long for one of these unhappy divagations. My sister had to tell me who was staying in the house: an aunt was there, my mother's sister, and an uncle, my mother's brother, was coming over next day. It is easy to guess how the very mention of these names beguiled us from what should be the subject of our thought. And the room itself supplied plenty of distractions: all the old furniture, the colour of the walls, the very atmosphere of the room took my thought back to my childhood. The sofa on which my sister was sitting had been broken years ago, and I unwittingly remembered how it had been broken; it had been taken away to a lumber-room; somebody had had it mended. I began to wonder who had done this—mother most likely, she looked after everything. I have said that I had just arrived after a long journey. My sister could not do else than to speak of lunch, and we went into the dining-room, and in the middle of the meal my brother came in, looking so very solemn that I began to wonder if he had assumed the expression he thought appropriate to the occasion—I mean if he had involuntarily exaggerated the expression of grief he would naturally wear. We are so constituted that the true and the false overlap each other, and so subtly that no analysis can determine where one ends and the other begins. I remembered how the relatives and the friends on the day of the funeral in Sussex arrived, each one with a very grave face, perchance interrupting us in the middle of some trivial conversation; if so, we instantly became grave and talked of the dead woman sympathetically for a few minutes; then, on the first opportunity, and with a feeling of relief, we began to talk of indifferent things; and with

Resurgam every fresh arrival the comedy was re-acted. And returning from the past to the present, I listened to my brother, who was speaking of the blunder that had been made: how a wrong doctor had come down owing to—the fault was laid upon somebody, no matter upon whom; the subject was a painful one, and might well have been dropped, but he did not dare to talk of anything but our mother, so we all strove to carry on the conversation as long as possible. But my brother and I had not seen each other for years, he had come back from India after a long absence; nor do I think I had seen my sister since she was married, and that was a long while ago; she had had children, and it was the first time I saw her in her middle age. We were anxious to ask each other questions, to hear each other's news, and we were anxious, too, to see the landscape that we had not seen, at least not together, for many years; we were tempted by the soft sunlight floating on the lawn, by an afternoon full of mist and sun, and I said to myself, 'Mother died certainly on the most beautiful day ever seen, the most winsome, the most white, the most wanton, as full of love as a girl in a lane who stops to gather a spray of hawthorn on a wedding day,' and then I fell to thinking why death should come to any one on such a bride-like day, and immediately after thought myself a fool for expecting Nature to prepare a decoration that would accord with our moods.

We cannot escape from the ancient savagery, though we know that Nature cares for us not at all, that our sufferings concern her not in the least, for our instincts go back to the time when the sun stood still and angels were about. My brother was, no doubt, struck by the contrast of the day and the event. But he did not speak his thoughts; no one dares to speak such thoughts, for they are the primal substance of which we are ashamed, deeming it too common for speech, unless we are poets

or peasants. The day moved like a bride from afternoon Resurgam
to evening, arrayed in white lace and blossom, with a small spray of yew in the poesy, unseen by all but us. I could think of something better were I to set my mind to the task, but that is how I thought on the day that I walked on the lawn with my brothers, ashamed and yet compelled to talk of what our lives had been during the years that separated us.

How could one be overpowered with grief amid so many distracting circumstances? Everything I saw was at once new and old. I had come among my brother and sister suddenly, not having seen them, as I have said, for many years; this was our first meeting since childhood, and we were assembled in the house where we had all been born. My eyes were drawn to the way the ivy had grown all over one side of the house, and I noticed the disappearance of one of the hollies on the lawn and a gap in the woods—these things were new; but the lake that I had not seen since a little child I did not need to look at, so well did I know how every shore was bent, and the place of every island. My first adventures began on that long yellow strand, and I did not need to turn my head to see it, for I knew that trees intervened; and I knew every twisting path through the woods. That yellow strand speckled with tufts of rushes was my first playground. But when my brother proposed that we should walk there, I found some excuse. Why go? the reality would destroy the dream; but I did not speak my thoughts for shame of them. What reality could equal my memory of the firs where the rabbits burrowed, of the drain where we fished for minnows, of the long strand with the lake far away in summer-time? How well I remember that yellow sand, hard and level in some places as the floor of a ballroom. The water there is so shallow that our governess used to allow us to wander at will, to run on

 ahead in pursuit of a sandpiper. The bird would fly round with little cries, and we were often certain it was wounded; perhaps it pretended to be wounded in order to lead us away from its nest. We did not think it possible to see the lake in any new aspect, yet there it lay as we had never seen it before, so still, so soft, so grey, like a white muslin scarf flowing out, winding past island and headland. The silence was so intense that one thought of the fairy-books of long ago, of sleeping woods and haunted castles; there were the castles on islands lying in misted water, faint as dreams. Now and then a chaffinch uttered a piercing little chatter from the branches of the tall larches, ending defiantly, and ducks talked in the reeds, but their talk was only a soft murmur, hardly louder than the rustle of the reeds now in full leaf. The shadows of reed and island seemed fixed for ever as in a magic mirror—a mirror that somebody had breathed upon, and, listening to the little gurgle of the water about the limestone shingle, one seemed to hear eternity murmuring its sad monotony.

The lake curves inland, forming a pleasant bay among the woods; there is a sandy spit where some pines have found root-hold, and they live on somehow, despite the harsh sallies of the wind in winter. Along the shore dead reeds lie in rows three feet deep among the rushes; had they been placed there by hand they could not have been placed with more regularity; and there is an old cart-track, with hawthorns growing out of a tumbled wall. The hillside is planted; beautiful beeches and hollies at one end, and at the other some lawny interspaces with tall larches swaying tasselled branches, shedding faint shadows and odours. A path leads through the wood, and under the rugged pine somebody has placed a seat, a roughly-hewn stone supported by two upright stones. For some reason unknown to me this seat always suggested,

even when I was a child, a pilgrim's seat. I suppose the Resurgam suggestion came from the knowledge that my grandmother used to go every day to the tomb at the end of the wood where her husband and sons lay, and whither she was taken herself long ago, when I was in frocks; and twenty years after, my father was taken there.

What a ceaseless recurrence of the same things! A hearse will appear again in a few days, perhaps the same hearse, the horses covered up with black, made to look ridiculous with voluminous weed, the coachman no better than a zany, the ominous superior mute directing the others with a wand; there will be a procession of relatives and friends, all wearing crêpe and black gloves, and most of them thinking how soon they can get back to their business.

Fearing premature burial (a very common fear), my mother had asked that her burial should be postponed until a natural change in the elements of her body should leave no doubt that life no longer lingered there. And the interval between her death and her burial I spent along the lake's shore. The same weather continued day after day, and it is impossible for me to find words to express the beauty of the grey reflection of the islands and the reeds, of the faint evanescent shores floating away, disappearing in the sun-haze, of the silence about the shores, a kind of enchanted silence, interrupted, as I have said, only by the low gurgle of the water about the limestone shingle. Now and then the song of the chaffinch would break out, ending always with the same defiant little flourish. 'A silence that seems to come out of the very heart of things!' I said, and stopped to listen, like one at the world's end, and then walked on through the rushes, tussocked grass and juniper-bushes that grew along the edge of the wood, wondering at the silence and the emptiness; only once interrupted by some wood-gatherers,

Resurgam poor women, bent under bundles of fagots. And thinking that perchance I knew them—they were evidently from the village; if so, I must have known them when I was a boy—I was suddenly seized by an unaccountable dread or a shyness, occasioned, no doubt, by the sense of the immense difference that time had effected in us: they were the same, but I was different. The books I had pondered and the pictures I had seen had estranged me from them, simple souls that they were; and the consciousness of the injustice of the human lot made it a pain to me to look into their eyes. So I was glad to be able to pass behind some bushes, and to escape into the wood without their perceiving me.

And coming upon pleasant interspaces, pleasanter even than those that lingered in my memory, I lay down, for though the days were the first days of May, the grass was warm, the tasselled branches of the tall larches were swinging faintly in a delicious breeze, bringing the words of the old Irish poet to my mind, 'the wood is like a harp in the hands of a harper.' To see the boughs, to listen to them seemed enough delight, and I began to admire the low sky, full of cotton-like clouds, and the white flower that was beginning to light up the little leaves of the hedgerow. It must have been the May-flower that drew down upon me a sudden thought of the beloved girl lost to me for ever. My mother's death had closed that wound a little, but in a moment all my grief reappeared, the wound gaped again, and it was impossible to staunch the bleeding.

A man cannot lament two women at the same time, and only a month ago the most beautiful thing that had ever appeared in my life, an idea which I knew from the first I was destined to follow, appeared to me, and stayed with me for a while, and passed from me—a love it was in which all the partial loves of my youth seemed to find

expression. Who shall tell the mystery of love that time cannot change? What word conveys it, fate? Millions of women have blonde, thick hair, and eyes grey and blue by turns, and small shapely breasts are common, but she had power to exalt my senses, making me feel I was more intensely alive when she was by me than I was when she was away. She was that tingle of life which we are always seeking, and which to retain we must lose. On a day such as I am telling, the whiteness of the lake, seen through the swaying branches of the larches, could not do else than remind me of her mystery, but the melancholy line of mountains wandering down the southern sky was not like her at all, and I cared to dwell only upon what was like her. But from too deep thinking of her a madness crept up behind the eyes, and in it the thought came and went that it were an exquisite despair to know that I should never possess her sweet personality again, never again hold her dainty oval face in my hands, so that I might better steep myself in her eyes, and that all the intimacy of her person was now but a memory never to be renewed by actual sight and touch. In these moments of passionate memory one experiences real grief, a pang that has not found expression in art except in Niobe; even that concentration of features is more an expression of despair than grief. And it was the grief that this girl inspired that prevented me from mourning my mother as I should like to have mourned her, as she was worthy of being mourned, for she was a good woman, her virtues shone with more admirable light year after year. And had I lived with her, had I been with her during the last years of her life, her death would have come upon me with a sense of personal loss, I should have mourned her the day she died as I shall mourn her in London, when the fire is sinking, and the sweetness of memory steals by me, and I realise what I lost in losing

Resurgam

Resurgam her. We do not grieve for the dead for that they have been deprived of the pleasures of this life (if this life be a pleasure), but for our own loss of them. But who would impugn such selfishness? It is the best we have, it is our very selves. Think of a mistress's shame if her lover were to tell her that he loved her for charity's sake; she would hate him for such altruism, and turn her face from him for a while until perchance some desire of possession would send her back to him.

We are always thinking of ourselves directly or indirectly. I was thinking of myself when shame prevented me from going to meet the poor wood-gatherers; they would not have thought at all of the injustice of having been left to the labour of the fields while I had gone forth to enjoy the world; they would have been interested to see me again, and a few kind words would have made their load seem easier on their backs. But, called back by an unexpected connection of ideas, I began to consider that injustice is undoubtedly a part of our human lot, for we may only grieve passionately for the casual, or what seems the merely casual; mayhap for that the ultimate law is hidden from us; I am thinking now of her who comes suddenly into our lives, tempting us with colour fugitive as that of a flower, luring us with light as rapid as the light shed from the wings of a dove. Why, I asked myself, as I lay under the larches, are we to mourn transitory delight so intensely, why should it possess us more entirely than the sorrow that we experience for her who endured the labour of child-bearing, who suckled us perchance at her breast, whose devotion to us was unceasing, and who grew kindlier and more divorced from every thought of self as the years went by? From injustice there can be no escape, not a particle. At best we can, indeed we must, acquiesce in the fact that the only sorrow to be found in our hearts for aged

persons is a sort of gentle sorrow, such as the year itself Resurgam
administers when we come home, our hands full of the beautiful single dahlias that the Dutchmen loved, bound up with sprays of reddening creepers, along the sunny roads over which the yellow beeches lean pathetically, sad, it would seem, even as we are for the year gone by. But we do not grieve passionately; our hearts do not break. Then, again, we cannot grieve as the conventions would have us grieve—in strange dress; the very fact of wearing crêpe and black gloves alienates us from our real selves; we are no longer ourselves, we are mummers engaged in the performance of a masque. I could have mourned my mother better without crêpe. 'Nothing has been invented anything so horrible as the modern funeral,' I cried out. A picture of the hearse and the mutes rose up in my mind, and it was at that very moment that the song of the chaffinch broke out again, and just above my head, in the larches—an ugly, shrilling song of about a dozen notes, ending, as I have said, with a defiant little flourish. 'What bird can it be,' I cried out, 'that comes to interrupt my meditations?' and rising to my feet, I tried to discover it amid the branches of the tree under which I had been lying. It broke out again in another tree a little further away, and again in another. I followed it, and it led me round the wood towards the hilltop to the foot of the steps, two short flights; the second flight, or part of it at least, has to be removed when the vault is opened. It consists, no doubt, of a single chamber, with shelves along either side; curiosity leads few into vaults not more than a hundred years old; above the vault is the monument, a very simple one, a sort of table built in, and when my father was buried a priest scrambled up, or was lifted up by the crowd, and he delivered a funeral oration from the top of it.

Resurgam That day the box edgings were trampled underfoot, and all the flowers in the beds. My mother, perhaps, cared little for flowers, or she did not live here long enough to see that this garden was carefully tended; for years there were no children to come here for a walk, and it was thought sufficient to keep in repair the boundary wall, so that cattle should not get in. No trees were cut here when the woods were thinned, and the pines and the yews have grown so thickly that the place is overshadowed; and the sepulchral dark is never lifted even at mid-day. At the back of the tomb, in the wood behind it, the headstones of old graves show above the ground, though the earth has nearly claimed them; only a few inches show above the dead leaves; all this hill-side must have been a graveyard once, hundreds of years ago, and this ancient graveyard has never been forgotten by me, because of something that happened long ago when I was a little child. The mystery of the wood appealed to my curiosity, but I never dared to scramble over the low wall, till one day, leaving my governess, who was praying by the tomb, I discovered a gap through which I could climb. My wanderings were suddenly brought to an end by the appearance, or the fancied appearance, of somebody in a brown shawl or dress—a woman, I thought it must be. She seemed to float along the ground, and I hurried back, falling and hurting myself severely in my hurry to escape through the gap. So great was my fear that I spoke not of my hurt to my governess, but of the being I had seen, beseeching her to come back; but she would not come back, and this fact impressed me and I said to myself, 'If she didn't believe somebody was there she'd come back.' The fear of the woman in the brown shawl endured for long afterwards, and I used to beg of her

not to cross the open space between the last shift of the wood and the tomb itself. We can re-live in imagination an emotion already experienced, and everything I had felt when I was a child about the mysterious hollows in the beechwood behind the tomb and the old stone there, and the being I had seen clothed in a brown cloak, I could re-live again, but the wood enkindled no new emotion in me. Everything seemed very trivial—the steps leading to the tomb, the tomb itself, the boundary wall; and the enchanted wood was now no more than an ordinary wood with a few time-worn stones showing through the dead leaves. Marvels never cease; in youth the external world is the marvel, later our inner life; and that day it was my continuity from childhood to manhood that was marvellous to my understanding. The seeing of the ghost might be childish fancy—a way of explanation; but how explain the change in the wood? Was its mystery also a dream, an imagination? Which is the truth—that experience robs the earth of its mystery, or that we have changed so that the evanescent emanations which in old time we were aware of, and which sometimes used to take shape, are still there, only our eyes are no longer capable of perceiving them? May not this be so?—for as one sense develops, another declines. The mystic who lives on the hillside in the edge of a cave, pondering eternal rather than ephemeral things, obtains glimpses, just as the child does, of a life outside this life of ours. Or do we think these things because man will not consent to die like a plant? and wondering if a glimpse of another life had once been vouchsafed to me when my senses were more finely wrought, I descended the hillside and lay in the shadow of the tasselled larches, trying to convince myself that I had

 not hoped to see the brown lady, if it were a lady I had seen, bending over the stones of the old burial-ground.

One day the silence of the woods was broken by the sound of a mason's hammer, and on making inquiry from a passing workman—his hodman probably—I learned that on opening the vault it had been discovered that there was not room for another coffin. But no enlargement of the vault was necessary; a couple of more shelves was all that would be wanted for many a year to come. His meaning was not to be mistaken—when two more shelves had been added there would be room for my brothers, myself, and my sister, but the next generation would have to order that a further excavation be made in the hill, or look out for a new burial-ground. He stood looking at me, and I watched for a moment a fine young man whose eyes were pale as the landscape, and wondered if he expected me to say that I was glad that things had turned out very well. . . . The sound of the mason's hammer got upon my nerves, and feeling the wood to be no longer a place for meditation, I wandered round the shore as far as the old boat-house, wondering how it was that the words of a simple peasant could have succeeded in producing such a strange revulsion of feeling in me. No doubt it was the intensity with which I realised the fact that we are never far from death, none of us, that made it seem as if I were thinking on this subject for the first time, for as soon as we reach the age of reflection the thought of death is never long out of our minds. It is a subject on which we are always thinking. We go to bed thinking that another day has gone, that we are another day nearer our graves. Any incident suffices to remind us of death. That very morning I had seen two

old blue-bottles huddled together in the corner of a pane, and at once remembered that a term of life is set out for all things, a few months for the blue-bottle, a few years for me. We forget how we thought twenty years ago, but I am prone to think that even the young meditate very often upon death; it must be so, for all their books contain verses on the mutability of things, and as we advance in years it would seem that we think more and more on this one subject, for what is all modern literature but a reek of regret that we are but bubbles on a stream? I thought that nothing that could be said on this old subject could move me, but a boy from Derryanny had brought home to me the thought that follows us from youth to age better than literature could have done; he had exceeded all the poets, not by any single phrase, it was more his attitude of mind towards death (towards my death) that had startled me, and as I walked along the shore I tried to remember his words. They were simple enough, no doubt, so simple that I could not remember them, only that he had reminded me that Michael Malia, that was the mason's name, had known me since I was a little boy; I do not know how he got it out; I should not have been able to express the idea myself, but without choosing his words, without being aware of them, speaking unconsciously, just as he breathed, he told me that if my heart were set on any particular place I had only to tell Michael Malia and he would keep it for me; there would be a convenient one just above my grandfather when they got the new shelf up; and he mentioned that he had heard it said that we were both writers. I thanked him, and fell to thinking that he had 'taken it out of me' as perhaps no poet had ever done, and I vowed never to forget him as I saw him going away stolidly through the greenwood, his bag of lime on his back.

Resurgam

Resurgam And sitting down in front of the tranquil lake, I said, 'In twenty or thirty years I shall certainly join the others in that horrible vault; nothing can save me,' and again the present slipped away from me, and my mind became again clear as glass; the present is only subconscious; were it not so we could not live. I have said all this before, and again I seemed to myself like a fly crawling up a pane of glass, falling back, buzzing, and crawling again. Every expedient that I explored proved illusory, every one led to the same conclusion that the dead are powerless. 'The living do with us what they like,' I muttered, and I thought of my Catholic relations, every one of whom believes in the intervention of priests and holy water, the Immaculate Conception, the Pope's Indulgences, and a host of other things which I could not remember, so great was my anguish of mind at the thought that my poor pagan body should be delivered helpless into their pious hands. I remembered their faces, I could hear their voices—that of my brother, whom I shall always think of as a strayed cardinal rather than as a colonel; I could see his pale eyes, moist with faith in the intercession of the Virgin—one can always tell a Catholic at sight, just as one can tell a consumptive. The curving lake, the pale mountains, the low shores, the sunlight and the haze contributed not a little to frighten me; the country looked intensely Catholic at that moment; my thoughts swerved, and I began to wonder if the face of a country takes its character from the ideas of those living in it. 'How shall I escape from that vault?' I cried out suddenly. Michael Malia's hodman had said that they might place me just above my grandfather, and my grandfather was a man of letters, an historian whose histories I had not read, and in the midst of the horror my probable burial inspired in me, I found some amusement in the

admission that I should have liked the old gentleman Resurgam whose portrait hung in the dining-room to have read my novels, and began to speculate on what the author of a history of the French Revolution[1] would think of *Esther Waters*. The colour of the chocolate coat he wears in his picture fixed itself in my mind's eye, and I began to compare it with the colour of the brown garment worn by the ghost I had seen in the wood. Good Heavens, if it were his ghost I had seen!

And listening to the lapping of the lake water, I imagined a horrible colloquy in that vault. It all came into my mind, his dialogue and my dialogue. 'Great God!' I cried out, 'something must be done to escape,' and my eyes were strained out on the lake, upon the island on which a Welshman had built a castle. I saw all the woods reaching down to the water's edge, and the woods I did not see I remembered; all the larch-trees that grew on the hillsides came into my mind suddenly, and I thought that a great pyre might be built out of them. No trees had been cut for the last thirty years; I might live for another thirty; what grand timber there would then be to build a pyre for me, a pyre fifty feet high, saturated with scented oils, and the body of me lying on the top of it with all my books (they would make a nice pillow for my head); the ancient heroes used to be laid with their arms beside them; their horses were slaughtered so that their spirits might be free to serve them in the aerial kingdoms they had gone to inhabit. My pyre should be built on the island facing me, its flames would be seen for miles and miles, the lake would be lighted up by it, and my body would become a sort of beacon fire—the beacon of the pagan future awaiting Old Ireland? Nor would the price of such a funeral be anything too

[1] Still unpublished.

excessive—a few hundred pounds perhaps, the price of a thousand larches and a few barrels of scented oil and the great feast, for while I was roasting, my mourners should eat roast meat and drink wine and wear gay dresses—the men as well as the women; and the gayest music would be played, selections from the "Marriage of Figaro," and the fine music from the "Valkyrie," to bring the evening to a close, but I am improvising a selection, which is a thing that requires careful thought. It would be a fine thing indeed if such a funeral—I hate the word—such a burning as this could be undertaken, and there is no reason why it should not be, unless the law interdicts public burnings of human bodies. My face clouded and my soul too; I grew melancholy as the lake, as the southern mountains that wander down the sky, plaintive as Irish melodies, for the burning I dreamed of so finely might never take place. I might have to fall back on the Public Crematorium in England—in Ireland there is no Crematorium—Ireland lingers in the belief in the resurrection of the body. 'Before I decide,' I said to myself, 'what my own funeral shall be, I must find out what funeral liberties the modern law and Christian morality permit the citizen,' and this I should not be able to discover until I returned to Dublin.

It was by the side of dulcet Lough Cara that I began to imagine my interview with the old family solicitor, prejudiced and white-headed as the king in a certain kind of romantic play, a devout Catholic, who would certainly understand very little of my paganism, but I should catch him on two well-sharpened horns: whether he should be guilty of so unbusiness-like an act as to refuse to make a will for theological reasons, or to do a violence to his conscience by assisting a fellow-creature to dispose of his body in a way that would give the Almighty much trouble

to bring about the resurrection of the body in the valley of Resurgam Jehoshaphat. The embarrassment of the family solicitor would be amusing, and if he declined to draw up my will for me, there would be plenty of other solicitors who would not hesitate to draw up whatever will I was minded to make. In order to secure the burial of my body, my notion was to leave all my property, lands, money, pictures and furniture, to my brother, Colonel Maurice Moore, on the condition that I should be burnt and the ashes disposed of without the humiliation of Christian rites; that if the conditions that the inheritance carried with it were so disagreeable to Colonel Maurice Moore that he could not bring himself to see that the disposal of my remains was carried out according to my wishes, my property, lands, money, pictures and furniture, should go to my brother, Augustus Moore; that in the event of his declining to carry out my wishes regarding the disposal of my remains, all my property should go to my brother, Julian Moore; that if he should refuse to carry out my wishes regarding the disposal of my remains, all the said property should go to my friend, Sir William Eden, who would, I felt sure, take a sad pleasure in giving effect to the wishes of his old friend. A will drawn up on these lines would secure me against all chance of being buried with my ancestors at Kiltoon, and during the next two days I pondered my own burning. My brother might think that he was put to a good deal of expense, but he would not fail me. He had taken off my hands the disagreeable task of seeing the undertakers and making arrangements for the saying of Masses, etc., arrangements which would be intensely disagreeable to me to make, so I had plenty of time to think out the details of my burning, and I grew happy in the thought that I had escaped from the disgrace of Christian burial—a disgrace which

Resurgam was never, until the last two days, wholly realised by me, but which was nevertheless always suspected. It was the dread of Kiltoon, no doubt, that inspired the thought of death from which in late years I had never seemed able to escape; and being of the romantic temperament, I could not forgo, but loosed my imagination on the burning I imagined and the vision that had come to me: a pyre at least fifty feet sending forth a heat so intense that the mourners would have to take to the boats. A fine spectacle it would be, if the law would allow it, but there was a law against the burning of human remains, and I might have to fall back on the Public Crematorium. But wherever and however I was burnt I should have to decide what I would wish to be done with the ashes, and in a moment of happy inspiration I conceived the idea of a Greek vase, and began to recall to mind all the Greek vases I had seen. All are beautiful, even the Roman Greek; these are sometimes clumsy and heavy, but the sculpture is finely designed and executed. Any Greek vase, I decided, would satisfy me, providing, of course, that the relief represented Bacchanals dancing, and nearly every Greek vase is decorated in this way. The purchase of the vase would be an additional expense; no doubt I was running my heir in for a good deal of money—it is becoming more and more difficult to buy original Greek sculpture!—and in a moment of posthumous parsimony my thoughts turned to a copy of a Greek vase in granite, granite being more durable than marble. It was delightful to take a sheet of paper and a pencil and to draw all that I remembered of the different vases, different riots of lusty men carrying horns of wine, intermingled with graceful girls dancing gracefully, youths playing on pipes, and amidst them fauns, the lovely animality of the woods, of the landscape ages, when men first began to

milk their goats, and when one man out of the tribe, more Resurgam
pensive, more meditative than the others, went down to the river's bank and cut a reed and found music within it. The vase I remembered best has upright handles springing from the necks of swans. It stands about two feet high, perhaps a little more, and its cavity should be capable of containing all that remains of me after my burning. None would have thought, from the happy smile upon my lips, that I was thinking of a Grecian urn and a little pile of white ashes. 'O death, where is thy sting?' I murmured, and the pencil dropped from my hand, for I could only remember partially the youth who danced next to an impulsive maiden, his left arm about her shoulder. 'But she is more impulsive than he,' I said, and immediately fell to thinking if the source of his wistfulness was another girl or a poem that he loved better than his partner in the dance. Little by little many of the figures in the saturnalia returned to me, for the sculpture was so well done that the years had only dimmed my memory, and as it cleared I saw the girl dancing, her right arm extended, her left bent, upholding a scarf. The figure continued to disclose itself in memory: a beautiful placing of the breasts, and of all, the architecture of the belly, so perfect in design that it seemed as if the girl must have been before the sculptor as he worked. 'Ingres and Antiquity alone knew how to simplify,' I cried. 'How exquisite!' I said, 'is that thigh, how well it advances! And we poor moderns have lived upon that beauty now well-nigh two thousand years ago. But how vainly we have tried to imitate that drapery, flowing about the ankles like foam breaking on the crest of a wave.' A slender youth stands next; his shoulders are raised, for the pipes are to his lips, his feet are drawn close together,

Resurgam and by him a satyr dances wildly, clashing cymbals as he dances. He is followed, I think—it is hard to say whether this be a recollection of another vase, or whether the figure is included in the same group—by a faun, tempting the teeth and claws of a panther with a bunch of grapes.

It was this winsome faun that decided me to choose this vase as the repository of my ashes, and to enjoin in the will that I should make as soon as I returned to Dublin that the best sculptor available should be employed to make a copy of it. But my will must not be too complicated, else it might be contested. All that is not common can easily be argued to be madness by a loquacious lawyer before a stupid jury. For who except a madman, asks the lawyer, would trouble to this extent as to what shall be done with his remains? Everybody in the court agrees with him, for every one in court is anxious to prove to his neighbour that he is a good Christian. Everything is convention, and lead coffins and oak coffins cannot be held as proof of insanity, because men believe still in the resurrection of the body. Were the Pharaohs insane? Was the building of the Great Pyramid an act of madness? The common assurance is that it matters nothing at all what becomes of our remains, yet the world has always been engaged in setting up tombs. It is only those pretty satyrs who do not think of tombs. Satyrs wander away into some hidden place when they feel death upon them. But poor humanity desires to be remembered. The desire to be remembered for at least some little while after death is as deep an instinct as any that might be readily named, and our lives are applied to securing some little immortality for ourselves. What more natural than that every one should desire his death and burial to be, as

it were, typical of the ideas which he agreed to accept during life? What other purpose is served by the consecration of plots of ground and the erection of crosses? In this, at least, I am not different from other people: if I am anxious about my burning, it is because I would to the last manifest and express my ideas, and neither in my prose nor verse have I ever traced out my thoughts as completely or as perfectly as I have done in this order for my tomb. One trouble, however, still remained upon my mind. Where should the vase be placed? Not in Westminster Abbey. Fie upon all places of Christian burial! A museum inspires lofty thoughts in a few; Goncourt speaks of the icy admiration of crowds. The vase might stand in the stone hall, and in the very corner where I learned to spin my top. But sooner or later a housemaid would break it. The house itself will become the property of another family, and the stranger will look upon the vase with idle curiosity, or perhaps think it depressing to have me in the hall. An order for my removal to a garret might be made out.

Resurgam

The disposal of the vase caused me a great deal of anxiety, and I foresaw that, unless I hit upon some idea whereby I could safeguard it from injury for ever, my project would be deprived of half its value. As I sat thinking I heard a noise of feet suddenly on the staircase. 'They are bringing down my mother's coffin,' I said, and at that moment the door was opened and I was told that the funeral procession was waiting for me. My brother, and various relatives and friends, were waiting in the hall; black gloves were on every hand, crêpe streamed from every hat, 'all the paraphernalia of grief,' I muttered; 'nothing is wanting.' My soul revolted against this mockery. 'But why should I pity my mother? She

Resurgam wished to lie beside her husband. And far be it from me to criticise such a desire!'

The coffin was lifted upon the hearse. A gardener of old time came up to ask me if I wished there to be any crying. I did not at first understand what he meant; he began to explain, and I began to understand that he meant the cries with which the Western peasant follows his dead to the grave. Horrible savagery! and I ordered that there was to be no keening, but three or four women, unable to contain themselves, rushed forward and began a keen. It was difficult to try to stop them. I fancy that every one looked round to see if there were any clouds in the sky, for it was about a mile and a half to the chapel; we would have to walk three miles at least, and, if it rained, we should probably catch heavy colds. We thought of the damp of the wood, and the drip from the melancholy boughs of yew and fir growing about that sepulchre on the hillside. But there was no danger of rain; Castle Island lay in the misted water, faint and grey, reminding me of what a fine burial I might have if the law did not intervene to prevent me. And as we followed the straggling grey Irish road, with scant meagre fields on either side—fields that seemed to be on the point of drifting into marshland—past the houses of the poor people, I tried to devise a scheme for the safeguarding of the vase. But Rameses the Second had not succeeded in securing his body against violation; it had been unswathed; I had seen his photograph in the Strand; and where he failed, how should I succeed?

Twenty priests had been engaged to sing a Mass, and whilst they chanted, my mind continued to roam, seeking the unattainable, seeking that which Rameses had been unable to find. Unexpectedly, at the very moment when the priest began to intone the Pater Noster, I thought of

the deep sea as the only clean and holy receptacle for the vase containing my ashes. If it were dropped where the sea is deepest, it would not reach the bottom, but would hang suspended in dark moveless depths where only a few fishes range, in a cool, deep grave "made without hands, in a world without stain," surrounded by a lovely revel of Bacchanals, youths and maidens, and wild creatures from the woods, man in his primitive animality. But nothing lasts for ever. In some millions of years the sea will begin to wither, and the vase containing me will sink (my hope is that it will sink down to some secure foundation of rocks to stand in the airless and waterless desert that the earth will then be). Rameses failed, but I shall succeed. Surrounded by dancing youths and maidens, my tomb shall stand on a high rock in the solitude of the extinct sea, of an extinct planet. Millions of years will pass away, and the earth, after having lain dead for a long winter, as it does now for a few weeks under frost and snow, will, with all other revolving planets, become absorbed in the sun, and the sun itself will become absorbed in greater suns, Sirius and his like. In matters of grave moment, millions of years are but seconds; billions convey very little to our minds. At the end of, let us say, some billion years, the ultimate moment towards which everything from the beginning has been moving, will be reached; and from that moment the tide will begin to flow out again, the eternal dispersal of things will begin again; suns will be scattered abroad, and in tremendous sun-quakes planets will be thrown off; in loud earthquakes these planets will throw off moons. Millions of years will pass away, the earth will become cool, and out of the primal mud life will begin again in the shape of plants, and then of fish, and then of animals. It is like madness, but is it madder than Palestinian folklore? and I believe

Resurgam

Resurgam that billions of years hence, billions and billions of years hence, I shall be sitting in the same room where I sit now, writing the same lines that I am now writing: I believe that again, a few years later, my ashes will swing in the moveless and silent depths of the pacific ocean, and that the same figures, the same nymphs, and the same fauns will dance around me again.

The End of this Volume.

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Moore, George
Memoirs of my dead life.

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